Indian Temple

FORMS AND FOUNDATIONS

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T.V. Sairam

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T. V. SAIRAM

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TO
MY FATHER

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Preface

In recent years, there has been a slow emergence (or re-emergence) of interest in Eastern mysticism from a century of scientific thought based, in the broadest sense, on a materialistic outlook. This revival of interest could be partly due to causes within the edifice of science itself.

A fresh attempt to "unify" the systems of mysticism and science has been explained by Fritjof Capra in his book, "The Tao of Physics" in the following way : "Mystics understand the most of the Tao but not its branches; scientists understand its branches but not its roots. Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science; *but man needs both*."

The Indian sub-continent has remained throughout its history, a seat of various religious philosophies and practices. Hinduism, which is often described as "way of life" rather than a religion, has absorbed several of such concepts and practices, emulated and adopted by different sects within its fold but also those invented or innovated by its rivals and dissidents.

Religious conceptions and experiences of a devotee have thus been attempted to be communicated to others in several ways. The forms of such expression could take any shape—from an elaborate epic to a beautiful poetry; from a simple icon to a gigantic temple.

It is this later form of religious expression with its underlying concepts that determine their construction modes and patterns has been the subject-matter of this work. What is attempted here is to focus the fact that such modes and patterns are the products not only of the aesthetic and professional eyes of the architect but also equally, if not more, the belief, the thinking and the ideal of the religionist.

While dealing with forms that are found in the vast spread of the sub-continent, a classificatory approach has been attempted so that a broad-idea could be framed. An attempt has also been made to trace out the possible evolutionary line of such forms.

Under the Chapter *foundations*, various concepts involved with religion, such as psi, myth, symbols and aesthetics are outlined. It has been attempted to link these disguised elements with manifest forms of iconography as well as architecture.

New Delhi

T.V. SAIRAM

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I

Background

THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION

Recent years have come across a revival of interest in Eastern mysticism and spirituality after a long period of dormancy when Western concepts of rationalism reigned supreme leading to the unparallelled material developments that the mankind has witnessed.

However, inspite of the fact that the popular Western schools of empiricism, rationalism, dialectism and even certain well-known versions of existentialism could spurn out all attempts to justify the possible theistic entanglement in interpreting the worldly existence, it is a fact acceptable to any psychologist that human mind, whether oriental or occidental is not rational always and at all times. It is not solely composed of intellect alone. Human thoughts and actions are governed equally by sentiments, emotions and beliefs. No amount of logic and dialectics could keep a man stuck to his intellectual side all the time, since he is also fashioned by his own whims and fancies, likes and dislikes, tastes and preferences which could often be beyond the analytical understanding of any rationalist mind. Hence the method of procedure for solving his day-to-day problems of his existence cannot always be based on sheer logic or reasoning. The importance of intuitive knowledge which is entirely a non-intellectual experience of reality seems to have started gaining acceptance even among the present-day scientists.[1] Since scientific knowledge forms only one mode of explanation based on inductive inferences leading to a deductive generalization, other modes of knowledge based on intuition, experience or revelation still have a separate identity which dwells in the realms of personality beyond the rational facet and which also attracts scientists especially the psychoanalysts for further discoveries. The approach of Neo-Freudians, who moved away from the purely individualistic and negative orientations of Freud to take into consideration other social and cultural factors, could be a line of development in this track.. Jung dwelt on the symbolic representation in religion and its influence on man. Otto Rank saw religion as man's quest for immortality. Eric Fromm viewed religion as a mechanism that helped man to retain his stability in the various crises of the modern world. Expanding from the unconscious, these researchers could produce deeper insights into the relation between the human psyche and religion. Even perhaps, the case of George Santayana, the 'decided materialist' could be of some relevance here. His major work, 'The Life of Reason' (1905-06) investigated the role of reason in the history of human interest and activities. Viewing the operation of reason as essential in the understanding of life, Santayana saw it as the union of impulse and ideation. With the publication of "Scepticism and Animal Faith" later in 1923, however, he deviated from his previous theories. New theories were developed in the "Realms of Being". Here he stressed the role of faith as dominant in the life of man. This was evidently a modification of his previous emphasis on reason, although he retained the method of scientific analysis as the best resource available to man in the study of human affairs. One cannot, however, deny the fact that Man's rationalism has brought him many boons. The material miracles that mankind has been witnessing, particularly, in the last few centuries with rapid industrialisation and tremendous advancements in science and technology have placed man as the dominant living creature on earth. His sensory capacity has been greatly extended by his inventions and innovations which make him see, hear and sense from a distance of hundreds and thousands of miles or even more. The time taken for his movements is being shortened in a supersonic way, and the earth has started shrinking before his evergrowing stature and size. His mental pace of calculations and analysis is speeded up by his inventions in the field of electronics. At the same time, these developments have not wiped off the element of uncertainty and insecurity in his existence, which is ever growing and never-surpassed. After all he is a tiny creature very much dependent upon his exterior forces for his very survival !

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[1] For a detailed account : cf Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 1975.

This dependence to his exterior has made him appreciate his limitations, how infinitesimal he is before the endless Universe and how he is, despite his day-to-day material advancements in science and technology, being governed by an unidentified or unidentifiable exterior (or interior ?) force right from his appearance to his disappearance on this earth (or even beyond !). The only rational or rather, practical way to overcome these inhibiting or depressing elements in his personality could be paradoxically to limit his rationalism to his down-to-earth requirements of life and accept an order for a 'macro' level understanding, which is *au-dela* his rationale. I know that the so-called 'rationalists' can never accept such an idea but one cannot ignore the fact that it is this approach that has sustained humanity in tact during the entire cultural history of human race. It is this approach which has made man's life more liveable and purposeful, for man's personality can never become balanced if he were to be overpowered by his reasoning capacity alone, totally ignoring other aspects such as feelings and belief.[1]

The realization of the need for something *au dela* the rationale should have given birth to faith—a phenomenon very much akin to

[1] I use the word 'feelings' in the same sense as Dr. Carl C Jung would use it. It refers to a judgement of value – for instance, agreeable or disagreeable, good or bad and so on. Feeling, according to this definition is not the emotion (which, as the word conveys, is involuntary). Feeling is, like thinking, a rational (*i.e.* ordering) function whereas intuition is an irrational, (*i.e.* perceiving) function. In so far as intuition is a 'hunch', it is not the product of a voluntary act; it is rather an involuntary event, which depends upon different external or internal circumstances instead of an act of judgement. Sensation (*i.e.*, sense perception) tells you that something exists; thinking tells you what it is; feeling tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and intuition tells you whence it comes and where it is going.

fad, superstitions, *bhakti* etc. Once faith or belief comes to occupy the central place in a man's personality, the materialization or the sensuous expression of such conceptions in the form of temples, monanteries, icons, images, symbols, *shlokas*, *mantras*, *yantras* etc. takes place as a natural consequence. It is in this context that the Indian sub-continent still remains a source of attraction, where the religious tradition is preserved, almost in its pristine forms, providing adequate ground-materials and resources, which fortunately have not undergone much distortions all these years.

THE CULTURAL FABRIC

When a man becomes conscious of a power (or reality) above and beyond his comprehension and recognises a dependence of himself upon that power (or reality) religion becomes a factor in his being. His emotions. thoughts and behaviour all get affected by this recognition. His ideas of what is true and real depend upon it, and his values of life adjust themselves in accordance with this new understanding.

In India, religion admits of the widest diversity of interpretation. This could be possible because of the importance attached to the entirely personal nature of experience of the followers. Hinduism, being interpreted in a broad sense as a way of life, rather than a religion, could embrace even dissenting concepts like atheism within its fold.

This unique variety is not restricted only to the religious concepts. Places of worship consecrated to various religions, their sects and sub-sects in different parts of the country exhibit a variety, which is again a highly typical feature of this land. Very much the same way the religious thoughts could evolve with permutations and combinations of old concepts and the fresh ones—so was there a discernible line of evolution in the temple structures, which, while adopting certain basic traits also started incorporating several new features, thanks to the possibility of synthesis of cultural and regional diversities among the shifting populations which alone could bring about an enlargement of scope for innovations, within the bounds of traditions which are no doubt, powerful and greatly influential.

The cultural fabric of India is woven with different elements borrowed from different races at different points of time. It has yet been possible however, for the discerning students of any branch of Indology to trace the ancestry of such traits from different ethnic groups that occupied India in her long chequered history. For instance, a nuance in a *raga* or a gesture in a *karana* or a workmanship in a sculpture or even the particular style of wearing a *sari*, could reflect the influence of particular race or region. Several races and communities like, Pre-Dravidian, Dravidian, Aryan, Iranian, Greek, Roman, Scythian, Hun, European etc. and religious groups such as Brahmanism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroasterianism, Sikhism etc. have contributed in full measures towards the weaving of India's cultural fabric which is, no doubt, unique for its variety.

THE ARCHITECTURAL WEALTH

Architecture which is the art and science of enclosing and cladding space created by nature has been the most dominant art in Indian history and all the other modes of art were considered as accessories to it. Temples which constitute the most significant architectural forms in India are found almost every where—upon mountains and hill-tops, in the plains, by the riversides, in the deep ravines and inside the dark and uninhabited caves, amidst thick jungles, on the beaches, in the deserts, on the frontiers as well as in the centre of the villages and towns. They are tiny or huge, ordinary or magnificient, simple or gorgeous, insignificant or attractive.

They depict not only the skill of the architect or a craftsman who realised them but also the conceptual basis which culminated in their realizations. They are, embodiments of faith which inspires their existence. Apart from the religious considerations, that have gone into their making, their forms and structures have been equally influenced by the aesthetic ideals of the concerned religious following at a particular point of time when they were fashioned. They are the meeting-points of art and religion. Art, which extends immense scope for freedom of expression here commingles with the disciplinarian traits of religion evolving a newer version, the 'religious art'. An ideal 'religious art' thus implies an optimal point where the artist's aspirations are restrained while at the same time free, fresh and relaxed outlook percolates into the religionists' sentiments. This fusion between religion and art became inevitable probably because at no point of time could man ever remain either without discipline or without freedom. As a consequence, the two systems, inspite of their inherent characteristics that differ from each other, could not remain totally isolated from each other. They had to come closer so that a more complete and durable hybrid system of 'religious art' could arise. Art without religion or religion without art could have remained thoroughly susceptible to changes and would not have acquired such a stability and dynamism at the same time in the long human history which the religious art could successfully achieve. This hybrid system gave the much-needed relief in the psychological plane for their followers by enabling the religionists to overcome the otherwise regimental outlook, while at the same time ensuring adequate restraint to the artists' unlimited and hitherto unbridled scope for freedom of expression.

Another possible explanation for the merger of art and religion could be due to the need for development of rituals and rites which necessitated inventions of objects, places and equipment for worship. Such inventions had to consciously or unconsciously satisfy the aesthetic aspirations of the population besides of course their intuitive and imaginary needs.

The setting up of particular areas, buildings, groves and enclosures has been a characteristic feature in the history of religious movements all over the world. All such temple structures have remained the expressions of deeply-ingrained religious beliefs, emotions and spiritual values. They are variously known in India : *Devagriham*, *Devagara*, house of God; *Devayatanam*, *Devalaya*, *Devakulam*, meaning seat or residence of God; *Mandiram*, *Bhavanam*, *Sthanam*, *Vesman* meaning waiting or abiding place; dwelling, abode; station or abode; entrance or dwelling, respectively; *Kirtanam*, *Harmyam*, a palatial building and *Vihara*. Etymologically, the term 'temple' is derived from the Latin word, *templum* which, in its original sense would mean a square or a rectangular place marked out by the augur for the purpose of his observations. An extended sense gave it the meaning of a consecrated place or building inaugurated by an augur. In its primitive sense, however, this word corresponds to a place marked off as sacred to a god, in which the house for god may be erected. In its usage it is employed rather in a restricted sense to denote various religious affiliations except Christianity and Islam. Since then the words *chaityas* and *gurudwaras* have been popularized in India so as to distinguish the places of worship belonging to Buddhism and Sikhism respectively. There, however, seems to be a tendency to increasingly restrict the scope of this word to denote the non-Buddhist and non-Sikh places of worship, although no such exclusion is contemplated in the present discussion.

II

Forms

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Due to lack of historical and archaeological data, it is quite difficult to ascertain the antiquity of temple worship although it is common belief that temple-like structures have been in existence over several millennia. The oldest sites which are believed to be connected with certain religious worship have been excavated from over a hundred ancient settlements of the Indus Valley ranging from Suktagendor in Makrana to Alamgirpur beyond Delhi in the Gangetic plains and Bhagalras south of Narmada. The remains of shops and of structures so substantial as to suggest temples or religious buildings are present in these sites. The Great Bath of Mohenjodaro, for instance, is believed to be connected with the religions of the local inhabitants, who performed certain rituals there, similar to those performed by the present-day Hindus. This Bath was a regular hydropathic establishment, consisting of an open quadrangle with verandahs backed by galleries and rooms on all sides; a swimming bath 30′×23′×8′ in the middle of the quadrangle, with flights of steps at the ends; wells from which the bath was filled; and an upper storey of timber indicated by charcoal and ashes found. This structure could have possibly exerted its influence in the development of later versions of the *teppakkulams* quite common in the South Indian temples.

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DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA

The intervening period in the ancient Indian history between the Aryan Conquest, *c.* 1500 B.C., and the advent of the historical Buddha (566 B.C.-486 B.C.) does not give any archaeological evidence on the existence of temples. This does not mean that there were no temples in India during this period. The main reason was that perishable and less durable media such as bamboo, wood, brick, cloth and clay only were employed for constructions. This preference of less durable media could be attributed to several factors. Good durable stone was in short supply in the plains of Northern India with a few exceptions like Delhi and Agra. Even the stone available at the foot-hills of Himalayas is an inferior conglomerate and quite unfit for chiselling. On the other hand wood was available in abundance particularly when dense stretches of forests used to separate towns and villages. Moreover, the Hindus considered wood as the best-suited medium to make idols and sacred objects. Another factor that could have gone in favour of them would be that as compared to stone, wood, particularly bamboo could be easily bent to obtain curvature, architrave etc., without much labour.

Clay is another medium which was available in plenty in the alluvial plains near the river beds. Both clay and wood formed the cheapest construction materials besides being easy to build with. Further, brick made of earth gone through the fire was considered by the Vedic Aryans to be a substance in which is reconstituted the body of Prajapati and Agni, and it was preferred in all Vedic sacrifices.

Another important medium used for temple construction was cloth and we find references to this medium in an eleventh century treatise on architecture, *Samarangana Sutradhara*. The tradition of using wood and cloth in the place of worship is still manifest in the present-day temple-cars, which are taken out on procession on festival days in several temple-cities in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh etc.

Yet another reason as to why durable temples were not constructed before the Mauryan era was that people preferred temporary sheds of worships rather than long-lasting monuments. Even idols built by them in clay, clothes and wood were used only for a temporary period and then removed and probably immersed in water as being done even today during Durga Puja and Ganesh Chaturthi in several parts of the country.

Building permanent temples came into vogue only during the Mauryan period and mainly due to the influence of the Buddhism. Buddhist stone reliefs of the first century B.C. fortunately make an attempt to depict the more ancient forms of buildings which had existed. The sculptural reliefs at Sanchi, Bharhut, Bhaja etc. portray the copies of the wooden buildings which were common in ancient times. From their foundations, these early structures were largely of wood. "There undoubtedly was sculpture too, probably of wood and clay, as well as painting on perishable grounds."[1]

The style with which the stone media has been treated so as to erect pillars, carve out friezes and architraves and build up façades and *toranas* reflect the translation of wood-carving techniques on the stone medium. The earliest Indian stone monuments imitate beam and rafter constructions and their reliefs depict houses and towns completely constructed in wood. Undoubtedly, the gateway or *torana* of the Buddhist *stupa* had its origin in a portal consisting of two wooden or bamboo uprights topped by a single horizontal bar that gradually developed into elaborate forms with three super-imposed cross bars. History also reveals the existence of palaces—as the one accounted by Megasthenes in 300 B.C.—completely made of bricks and wood and not of stones.

There are also some historians who believe that the Aryan invaders who came into India in the middle of the Second millennium B.C. did not make any attempt to build temples. Some authors, on the other hand, believe that alongwith the Indus cities, several pre-Aryan temple sites could have been destroyed by them, since the Vedic

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1. Sherman, E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art*, Thames and Hudson, 1964.

religion did not admit images or sacred places. There must, however, have been a lower stratum of animists who did not confine their worship to the deities of Nature.[1]

Any inquisitive person could wonder as to how the Mauryan and subsequently, the Gupta period could, all of a sudden prefer stones which was till now a neglected medium. In this connection, it is necessary to have an idea about the religious situation in the sub-continent prevailing at that time.

Indian sub-continent particularly, Buddhism and Hinduism had witnessed a religious upheaval in or around that time. This period brought out a totally new concept of Tantrism which had to confront face to face with the traditional, more orthodox and well-established practices in Brahmanism and Buddhism which had started giving extreme importance to asceticism, abstinence from sex and controlling desire etc. which were taken as the only means for achieving salvation or *moksha.* These restrictions, forcibly thrust on the common people against their will, by the more powerful Buddhist and Brahmanic theologians who dominated the social, religious and political scenes of the sub-continent could have even made a negative impact. The common man, who was, no doubt, quite low in the social hierarchy besides being extremely weak in ethical realms, could not be consistently suppressed by the superficial and often hypocritical moral preachings of the upper classes. He had to rise against these restrictions by bringing to the fore a total inversion of prevailing religious thoughts. While doing so, he was cautious and careful and to defuse the wrath of the more powerful conventionalists, he had to camouflage his concept under a religious pretext. Freedom and glorification of sex and love that he preached had to wear the cloth of divinity so as to make these concepts immune or defensive against possible attacks by the conservative orthodoxy. Thus sensuality of the common man was made to run parallel to the spirituality of the ascetics and the high brows.

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1. A. Barth, *Religions of India*, London, 1882.

This ancient Tantric movement of common people in India against the religious and social establishment reminds me a comparatively recent event in art-history. Members of the Dadaism, as adherents to an extremist anti-art movement, set out to shock a bourgeois public with productions which outraged all accepted literary and artistic traditions. Their productions included a urinal obtained by Marcel Duchamp and exhibited as "The Fountain" under the manufacturer's name. What is interesting to note here is that the Indian movement—more commonly known as the Tantrism, which originated very much like the Dadaism, in due course of time say by the eighth century A.D. assumed certain divinity and respectability so that it could successfully resist the powerful attacks from the reactionaries. This development is perhaps comparable to the birth of sur-realism out of Dadaism. Treatises like *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* which had expressed parallel lines of spiritual thinking by comparing a man imbued with the Holy Spirit with the one closely embraced by his beloved knowing nothing more of without or within, came in readily to support the new concept.

Although the orthodoxy could initially resist the development of the new concept, it had ultimately to succumb to the growing popularity of this common man's cult particularly in Central India. The Buddhism and Brahmanism had in due course of time, to incorporate some of these elements especially in forms of worship etc. The birth of Mahayana and the accommodation of cults of Shakti etc. in various parts of India could be the results of this religious revolution.

When so much of a change in deeper religious concepts and ethical preachings could take place around this time, one could easily appreciate the lack of resistance towards change in preference of construction medium, which was after all, just a superficial transformation.

During the Mauryan rule, the use of stone had thus become common for column and statues, the sort employed being sandstone, which was to survive for centuries. This important innovation is generally considered as the effect of Greco-Persian influence. Sandstone was also used in the Central Indian Temples while limestone or marble and trap were used in Western India and the Deccan respectively. A fine-grained black chloritic schist was used in the later Chalukya temples of the Kanarese districts in the Deccan. A similar stone, quarried in the Rajmahal hills was also used in Bengal for door frames etc. of brick temples; granite in South India and laterite, sandstone etc. in Orissa became popular media. In Gujarat and Rajasthan, the stones were carved, pieced together and placed in position. In the Kanarese districts and the Deccan, the details were carved *in situ*.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

It has been quoted from the Satapatha Brahmana a long description of an early Brahmanical temple as constructed some half-a-dozen centuries before the Christian era. The temple consisted simply of two sheds, which were merely formed of posts and beams, covered with reeds and mats and could only be described as belonging to the 'Thatch period' in architecture. From such an edifice to the temples of Mount Abu and Thanjavur the distance is great but, there seems to be little reason to doubt that the intervening stages were worked out for the most part by experiments with evanescent materials.

It is however quite difficult to conclusively establish any single line of evolution in so far as the process of development of temple structure is concerned. The only reason is the size and complexity of the sub-continent which baffles any serious studies in this regard. The building art which was developed in India during the first few centuries of the Christian era followed a discernible line of evolution more or less independently in the west, the south and the north of the sub-continent. But the basic inspiration for all of them was, surprisingly, the same and the principles on which their construction was based were mainly derived from a set of common traditional treatises, the *vastu shastras*.

The simplest temple structures in India, which date back to the Gupta period, often described as the Golden Age of Indian Art, could be seen, for example, in the Temple No. 17 at Sanchi. This temple consists of a simple cubical sanctum (*garbhagriha*) with an attached pillared porch and a flat and simple roof. Such simple square, flat-roofed shrines are also known from Aihole and Deogarh. This structure could have evolved from the rock-cut prototypes as may be seen from cave shrine No. 1 at Udayagiri near Sanchi. The pillars, here, are also characterized by the absence of vase and foliage members. Instead, the presence of a fluted bell-capital indicates an early feature. Authors like Fergusson, therefore, believe that this is the simplest version of temples. An amplification of this version both horizontally and vertically with fresh addition of a variety of segments such as platforms or socles, bases, super-structures etc. to obtain a vertical prolongation and ambulatory (*pradakshinapatha*), vestibule (*antarala*), pillared hall (*mandapa*), walled enclosure (*prakara*) etc. to result in a horizontal extension would constitute a reliable line of evolution. It could also be inferred that both these vertical and horizontal developments must have taken place side by side.

An important feature in the evolutionary process is the increased insistence on decorations and ornamentations on the outer walls of the cella, which appeared in successive phases. First, niches were introduced alongwith scenes from mythologies. Then, real chapels or chapel-like niches crowned by *chaitya*-window as a gable with blind doors or more often, the images of those important deities which otherwise would have found a place in the subsidiary shrines on the platform or by the side of the flights of steps, came to occupy. In the next stage, the niches were reserved for the eight protector gods of the horizon (*parivara devata*) or World Guardians (*lokpala* or *dikpala*) : Soma or Kubhera (North), Isana or Shiva (North East), Indra (East), Agni (South East), Yama (South), Niriti or Virupaksha (South West), Varuna (West) and Vayu (North West).

The vertical projections over the cella are the most conspicuous part of the temple structures. In the late fifth century A.D. the central idea had emerged which was to guide the whole development of these super-structures for centuries to come. They could be broadly categorized into two types : the *shikhara* and the *vimana*.

The *shikhara* is a curvi-linear spire projecting from a cubical cella usually crowned by a vase-shaped member or *kalasha*. The *shikhara*, commonly known as *deul* in Orissa are often sub-categorized in accordance with the Orissan texts. The spire of the *rekha*-type is conical and bee-hive shaped, which rises from a square base crowned with a flat, round-ribbed capping stone and a 'rounded vase of plenty'. They are, in reality, no more than four corbelled walls whose sides curve gently inward as they reach the top. It is the corbelled, horizontal stone courses which give the conical shape to the arch and the *shikhara*. The *rekha* is further divided into elements entitled shin, trunk, neck and skull, analogies that suggest that temple was regarded as a microcosm of Prajapati, the Cosmic Man. The *rekha* is also divided into stages or *bhumis* each one of which is presided over by its specific deity. Very often these *shikharas* are designed as mountains to signify that they were regarded as architectural replicas of Mount Meru or Kailasha. Another type, the *bhadra*, exhibits a terraced pyramidal form.

The earliest example of the Indo-Aryan architecture of Bhubneshwar is the Parasurameshwara temple of 750 A.D. It consists of a tower sanctuary of the *rekha*-type with an attached enclosed porch. The separate stone courses on the faces of the towers are accentuated by alternating inset courses whose shadows create strong horizontal patterns which are eventually subordinated to the mass of the whole. Among the many sculptural details found here and on other Orissan temples are small *chaitya*-window motifs which are by now, reduced to mere surface decorations or to frames for figures of humans and animals.

From the simple four-sided domelike projection which constitutes the so-called pure *nagara*-type, the *shikhara* development underwent certain modifications. According to Goetz, the *shikhara* developed from the upper storey of the early shrines through a progressive increase in number (on the average upto 9) and amalgamation of storeys. These were reduced to mere decorative façades, each with its plinth, wall cornice and roof; then the plinths and cornices and finally the walls as well were eliminated so that only a sequence of innumerable roofs survived, provided first with image niches, then mere dormer-windows (*gavaksha*), 'from which the heads of indeterminate gods looked down'. The whole structure was crowned by a cupola (*shringa*) or a wagon-roof (as may be found in Teli-ka-Mandir, Vaital Deul at Bhubneshwar and several other temples in greater India) or by a heavy, wheel-shaped stone-block, the *amalaka*. Around the eighth century, the outline of the spire became parabolic and its storeys often disappeared completely, being superseded by a maze of dormer-windows, now reduced to band ornaments.

It may be of interest to note the process of evolution that has taken place within the temple city of Bhubneshwar itself, where encircling a lake, once existed over seven hundred shrines and even now, there are five hundred structures in different stages of dilapidation and decay. The line of evolution here has been oriented towards the greater heights of *shikharas*. The ratio between the size of the cella and the spire which was 1:3 in the case of Parasurameshwara temple (750 A.D.) became 1:7 in the case of Lingaraja temple (1000 A.D.) which is considered to be very highly-evolved among the Bhubneshwar temples. Lingaraja temple thus represents the latest example of the Orissan style architecture at Bhubneshwar. The *shikhara* is now completely bee-hive shaped structure in which the original or cubical form of the cella is entirely merged into the curvilinear profile. The *shikhara* shrine is preceded by a number of porches of the *bhadra*-type reserved for the accommodation of worshippers and the performance of various religious spectacles.

Another evolutionary trait identified by authors like Gilbert Etienne refers to a tendency of *shikhara* becoming more and more slender and svelte. At Khajuraho, in the Vindhyas, the *shikhara* grows thinner and thinner as it rises having an un-parallelled elegance and *legerté*. The addition of a series of flanking vertical graded peaks, as in the Kandariya Mahadeva temple here, could be considered the climax of another distinguishable evolutionary trait. Since after seventh century, evolution of the northern temples have largely followed a regional pattern, more often influenced by the concerned dynasties, which ruled the sub-continent, it would be a difficult task to conclusively establish a single line of evolution.

Manasara and Kashyapa, the treatises which alongwith the others constitute *shilpa shastras*, profusely describe the construction principles and forms of *vimana*. While Manasara recognizes *vimanas* upto twelve storeys, Kashyapa describes sixteen-storeyed ones. A *vimana* may be round or may contain four, six or eight sides. The form of the edifice may be uniformly the same from the basement upto the spire. There are three types distinguishable on the basis of the construction medium: *sudha* consisting of a single material, *mishra* consisting of two materials and *sanchirna*, of three or more materials. There are again three sorts of *vimanas*, distinguishable on the basis of the dominance of height, breadth or length. *Sthanacha* has reference to height, *asana* breadth and *sayana* length. It can be seen that these shapes are generally in accordance with the posture of the idol installed in the *vimana*.

From the archaeological evidence, it could be concluded that the southern *vimana* development must have originated from a more primitive *kutavimana* (*vimana* with a prominent spire carrying a single *stupi* or finial) leading to *sabha*-type, *vimana* with vault-like or inverted boat-shaped spire carrying a series of *stupis*.

The magnificient grandeur of a *vimana* with an octagonal spire could be seen in the Brihadeshwara temple in Thanjavur. In this *vimana* the top of the spire is covered by a single huge granite block weighing about eighty tonnes, indeed a proof of the marvellous engineering skill of that period. The later kings who followed the Pallavas and the Cholas, however, gave up their concentration on the grandeur and height of *vimanas*. By this time the technique and style for constructing the *gopuram* over gateways, as heralded in the Kailashanatha temple of Ellora, had already made a dent in South

India.[1] Instead of constructing *vimanas* of great height projecting over the cella, the later architects focused their attention on the *gopurams* constructed on the gateways of the surrounding walls. Later versions of the South Indian temples as the one at Srirangam exhibit an almost inconspicuously small *vimana* against the backdrop of huge, masculine and imposing *gopurams*. This shift in architectural emphasis, conveys the flaunt and fanfaronade of an affluent section of people who were behind such construction. This subtle extravertism should have also been unconsciously inculcated in the architectural styles as a result of the growing awareness to invigorate the religious institutions during that period, since at that time, the very survival of Hinduism was threatened by the growing popularity of Jainism in south.

FUNCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The structural amplification in the temple constructions in the course of its evolution had to go hand in hand with functional proliferations in rites, rituals and other mundane activities. The temple, originally conceived as an embodiment of faith to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the community came to be associated with various social, cultural and economic activities as well.

Mundane economic functions such as providing employment for workers, masons, artisans, artists, engineers, priests, scholars, teachers etc. for constructing and maintaining these institutions, achieving redistribution by receiving huge donations from the *zamindars* and landlords, functioning as the money-lending institutions at the hours of crises such as drought, inundations etc., organizing trade fairs and shandies could be cited as the most common examples of its economic and financial functions.

[1] Although the Kailashanatha temple at Ellora shows the *gopuram* construction, its origin could perhaps, be traced back to the *toranas* found near the Buddhist stupas. A unique Orissan version of a further development in *toranas* could be seen in the temple of *Mukteshwara* at Bhubneshwar (975 A.D.), which the other temples at this site do not have. The trend of constructing *gopurams* however reached its zenith only in South India. *Torana* which was carried alongwith Buddhism to the Far East became better known as *torii* in Japan and *piu-lu* in China.

They had also provided inspirations to a number of poets, composers and artists who have richly contributed to the *bhakti* literature, music and dance. Innumerable *kritis* and poems composed by Nayanmars and Azhwars indicate how temples could influence the literary explosion in the Tamil language. Cultural activities ranging from music and *bhajans* to theatre and dramas have taken place in the temple precincts. The *natamandiras* of the Orissan temples and the *nrityamandapams* and *koothambalams* of the South Indian temples, as their names would imply, have provided venue for dances. Architecturally, some of the *koothambalams* like the one at Vatakkunatha temple at Trichur are marvels of structural workmanship with sloping roofs of carefully enmeshed copper plates 'austere, dignified and aloof.' Kathakali of Kerala, Bhagavatha Mela of Tamil Nadu, Veedinatakamu of Andhra Pradesh and Yakshagana Bayalata of Karnataka are the various dance-forms promoted by the temples through the centuries. The sculptural details at Thanjavur, the figures and motifs of dance and music in Belur, Halebid, Bhubneshwar, and Khajuraho depict the regional variations of the classical dance forms, which go against the general belief that the Bharata code was unaffected by experiment or innovation and that later treatises were commentatory rather than definitive. An examination of Chidambaram reliefs in the context of the relevant chapter of Natyashastra as well as Sangitaratnakara verses relating to the *karanas* is revealing of changes in the tradition.[1]

A temple festival was an occasion of great social rejoice. The rich and the poor alike had the benefit of these entertainments. During the festivities, pilgrims were given free food and lodging in the rest houses and in the *choultries* attached to the temples.

Marriages are even today performed in temples. They were also the meeting grounds for the learned and the Vedic scholars. Important religious texts, treatises and epics covering various aspects of human life and mythology, ranging from education and art to renunciation and god-realization were discussed here by the specialists in the fields.

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[1] Kapila Vatsyayan, 'Source Material for a history of Indian Dance and Music in the late Medieval period' (12th-18th *C*) From Summaries of Papers, *26th International Congress of Orientalists*, New Delhi, 1964.

As a cultural centre, the temple witnessed the evolution of different schools of art, architecture, sculptures, painting, music and dance in different parts of the country which brought out a variety of systems in plastic and performing arts, although all of them stemmed from the same spiritual stock.

RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES IN DEVELOPMENT

The temple architecture in India, very much like other forms of Indian art, has been strongly influenced by various racial, religious and sectoral traits. The pre-Aryans or Dravidians are believed to have contributed the sensual elements inherited from a long tradition of fertility cults. Hundreds of big-breasted and broad-hipped female forms excavated from the Indus Valley sites lead the archaeologists to speculate the possibility of existence of an ancient fertility cult which should have been frankly virile involving personal devotion and adoration (*bhakti*) and worship of male and female deities associated with procreation. Beginning with simple representations in clay and wood of fertility deities, the images of these cults were geared to the service of Buddhism in the form of exquisitely carved haunting beauties like *shalabhanjikas*, *vrikshakas*, *yakshis* etc. as found in and around several Buddhist monuments. The typical Indian notion of an ideal female body as found in these sculptures emphasizes the female characteristics, breasts, hips and pubic region, with that slight aesthetic exaggeration which gives full expression to the functions and qualities of these organs. In several cases, these fertility elements were represented in a down-to-earth manner. Symbols such as the phallus of Shiva, the *yoni* of Devi etc. could be traced back to the very beginning of civilization in the Indian sub-continent. The erotic couple, *mithuna*, with the large male and fertile female appears constantly from early times as a recurrent decorative element in both the Buddhist as well as the Hindu temples. They separate the principal scenes in Buddhist monuments and fill up the empty spaces in the crowded walls of the huge mediaeval temples. This pre-Aryan sensual element had come to stay for centuries in Indian art and architecture which manages to combine "so deep a spirituality with such an extraordinary sensuality".[1] This combination was perhaps possible only under the Indian conditions, where there were ample opportunities for cross-fertilization of concepts which could *prima facie* appear extreme and contradictory with each other for the rationalist.

In so far as the structure of cella is concerned, it is but certain that the Vedic Fire Altar which was square-shaped or cubical could have exercised great influence on its form. The shape of the flame or *agni* arising over the Vedic Fire Altar could be easily linked with that of several Indo-Aryan *shikharas* which are curvi-linear. Another probable parentage for this structure could be the original shape of the huts where the Indo-European speaking Vedic tribes from east of the Caspian lived. When these tribes penetrated into India from the north-west they lived in huts in their villages, often of a bee-hive pattern with a wooden structure and a circular wall of bamboo, roofed with leaves in the form of a dome or thatched with grass. These were reproduced in the rock-cut Sudama caves of the Ashoka period (*c* 250 B.C) in the Barabar Hills. In front, the roof hangs down as though covered with thatch[2]. As these huts became oval with barrel roofs, they were arranged around a square courtyard, but to what extent these dwellings constituted the prototype of the subsequent temples, cannot however, be conclusively determined.

As against the virility and sensuousness of the Dravidians and in contrast to their *bhakti* concept the Aryans' contribution centred around the notion of hierarchy which emphasized the exclusiveness of Brahmins for the performance of religious rites, abstractions, mathematics, symbolism etc. When the Aryans were thrusting their culture

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1. Gilbert Etienne, *Inde Sacrée*, Paris, 1955.
2. Fergusson, J., *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*.

on the conquered people they were also unconsciously or even silently absorbing a good many elements from the religion and culture of the Indus Valley people. The whole epic culture presented in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* shows signs of a fusion between the two traditions. Here, the contrast and complementarity between the Aryan and Babylonian or Chaldean religious outlooks may be relevant. Scholars suggest that the pre-Aryan Dasas or Dasyus were also settlers in India belonging originally to the Dahai of the Caspian steppes, and culturally related to the Chaldeans and Mongolians.[1]

The encounter between Aryans and Dasyus brought the two cultural approaches and religious attitudes together. There are clear evidences of a fusion between the two in the Hindu culture that evolved in the Indo-Gangetic plains. There are several terms in the Vedas which show an affinity between the different traditions like *Yahu*, *Yahvi*, *Yahvati* (similar to the Chaldean and Hebrew *Yahweh*), *asura* (Chaldean *ahura*) and others.[2]

In the same way as the racial history goes, the religious history also reveals that there was much reciprocity and mutual exchange of ideas and concepts between Hinduism and other religions. The first great impact was that of Buddhism, a non-conformist sect of the Vedic religion which arose in the 6th century B.C. It persuaded about one-half of India to accept the original religion in a restricted ethical sense, by renouncing ritual and metaphysics. But, within a few centuries India absorbed the new sect into the parent body and little trace of Buddhism as an independent religion was left in this country. In doing so it adopted many of the new attractive features of Buddhism like temples, image-worship etc. as also some of the ethical points like the emphasis on non-violence. In the architectural field the experience of the Mauryan architects had to wait for some centuries before the same could be passed on to the Hindus of the Gupta age who started using stones. Not only the employment of the medium, but also the formulation, plan and finish were to a great extent influenced, by the pioneering experience of the Buddhists. A concrete example of such influence which remains well-preserved even to this day could be the later versions of the typical South Indian *vimana* designed in the manner of the Buddhist *vihara* as one may still find in the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya. This Buddhist *vihara* should have accommodated the Buddhist Monks in all its seven storeys. Although this architecture was taken as a proto-type by the later-day South Indian kings, particularly Pallavas, who modelled their *rathas* essentially on this basis, the functional aspect of this architecture was ultimately lost sight of or deliberately ignored in due course of time. The Shore Temples at Mahabalipuram thus outwardly exhibit the storeyed superstructures without any functional importance. Buddhism almost disappeared in India by the middle ages; yet it made certain lasting contributions to Indian architecture in as much as to Indian religious tradition. The values brought to the forefront by Buddhism could neither be ignored nor wiped out by the later Hindu revival. They have, on the other hand, remained an integral part of the Indian tradition.

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[1] John. B. Chethimattam, *Patterns of Indian Thought*, 1971.

[2] D.R. Bhandarkar, 'Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture', *Sir William Meyer Lectures*, 1938-39, Madras University, 1940.

In the same way, Buddhism was influenced by Hinduism; in the field of art, vedic culture had already contributed the fundamental motifs for Buddhism : swastika, lotus, conch, umbrella, altar, wheel; sun, thunderbolt, *naga-garuda*, the Tree of Life and the full vase —all these symbols were the parts of the Brahmanical vedic traditions. The fiery pillar which represents the Buddha of Amaravati is reminiscent of the vedic myth in which the fire-god appears as a pillar or axis of the universe separating earth from heaven. The most famous Buddhist symbol of the wheel (*dharmachakra*) is also derived from the Rig vedic conception of the wheel of the sun or Time (*kala*).[1]

In a discussion on inter-religious influences in the architectural styles of India, one cannot avoid noticing the close affinity that exists not only between the ancient religions that developed as off-shoots from Hinduism but also between those which came to India from distant lands.

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[1] Radha Kamal Mookerjee, *The Flowering of Indian Art—The Growth & Spread of a Civilization*, 1964.

Muslim sailors from Arabia were settled in Malabar by the Hindu Kings there in very early times. Arabs invaded and conquered Sind in 711. But they could never proceed further and never reappeared as invaders. Other Muslim invaders came in the eleventh century and later. A large part of the Indian sub-continent was almost wholly under Muslim rule for 500 years or so. Hinduism preserved itself almost miraculously against the military, social and economic pressures exerted by Islam. The temple structure however, could preserve its identity, although there are stray instances where the recent constructions particularly in the North attempt to depict the Moghul simplicity by having smooth white-washed exteriors as in a mosque. These temples also exhibit the aesthetic and architectural style of the Moghul tombs, with their characteristic domes erected over cubical chambers.

In the same way certain mosques also exhibit the Hindu influence. Atala Masjid of Jaunpur could be one such example.

Sikhism, which started as a movement to reconcile the two major religions, Hinduism and Islam, not only depict the fusion between the two in its conceptual level but also in its constructions. Gurudwara, the Sikh temple is conceived of the moghul architectural style especially in having an imposing dome in the middle, with an accent to use marble medium, which was mostly used earlier in moghul monuments. The preference of simpler exterior and smoother walls, the geometrical patterns, the workmanship on a marble-medium all reflect the moghul aesthetic traits.

In so far as the influence of Christianity goes, a strong influence of the Christian or Western architecture could be seen in several Hindu temples in and around Goa, some of which could even be mistaken for churches from a distance.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT

It is but natural that in such an enormous land-area comprising mountains, valleys, plateaux, jungles, rivers, lakes, seas, ravines, etc. the microclimatic phenomena affect the building constructions. The various architectural styles found in India, although shaped by the fusion of different ethnic groups, have also been greatly influenced by such micro-climatic conditions. The variations are numerous, but here we must limit ourselves to studying the architecture in two major types of climate, the hot, humid region represented by places as different as Bengal, Tamil Nadu, the rain-torn regions of the West Coast etc. and hot, arid zones as represented by the North Western regions like Rajasthan, Gujarat etc.

Olgyay, in his book "Design with Climate"[1] prescribes the following features for a town in the hot-humid zone : a high situation, a loose and scattered structure which allows of air movement round the houses which stand separate, vegetation that provides shades and lakes or rivers that give air flow. According to him, the second type of extreme climatic conditions, that is, dryness with very high summer temperature and wide differences between the day and the night temperatures during winter months also make extreme architectural solutions necessary and that to protect themselves people had to fight the climate.

Olgyayan prescription seems to have been already in vogue, when we examine the functional styles in the Indian temple architecture. Arrangement of several segregated chapels for several gods and goddesses around the main sanctuary is a typical Dravidian style that could successfully be accommodated in the hot-humid zones of South India. Temples were also constructed traditionally on higher elevations as could be illustrated in the case of a number of Shaivite and Vaishnavite temples at Pazhani, Pazhamudircholai, Viralimalai, Tiruchi, Marudamalai, Tirupati, Swamimalai, Kunnakkudi, Ratnagiri, Sholingapuram, Kazhugumalai, Thanthonimalai, Tiruchen gode, Tirukkazhukundram etc.—to mention just a few names—which are all situated on hill-tops. In almost all the South Indian temples, the provisions for *prakaras* and *pradakshina pathas* provide adequate aeration and so do the inter-spatial zones of chapels around the main sanctuary. The elevated platforms or socles with adequate drainage facilities prevent the decay of monuments due to stagnant rain water. Location of gardens and nurseries in and around the temple zones is another feature which is not uncommon and so are the *teppakkulams* around the temple precincts.

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[1] Olgyay, Victor, *Design with Climate*, Princeton, New Jersey. 1963.

In addition to the above characteristics, which are conducive from the climatic point of view, the West Coast exhibits a style in which sloping roof made of wood and tiles constitutes a most prominent feature. The *srikoils* of Kerala are usually made of such roof structures which perfectly suit the local micro-climatic characteristics. These roofs protect the monuments by extending adequate drainage facilities. Again the temples at Assam are unique in their constructions well-adapted to the climate. On the other hand, the warmer, humid regions in India exhibit a distinct architectural line of evolution which culminates in the emergence of spacious pillared halls, which are usually open on all the four sides with tall ceilings above and a socle below.

While discussing the environmental impact, it is clear that one cannot attribute the architectural style in temples totally to their micro-climatic influences. Indian monuments have been equally influenced by aesthetics and religious conceptions in as much as functionalism. Even in the hot and humid climatic regions of India, a cella which is small, cubical, dark, with little or no aeration facilities—except for its front doorways—is but a common occurence. Functionally speaking, such a dark, cubical enclosure could be conducive not to a hot, humid climate but to the North Western type of climate which witnesses extreme weather conditions. It, therefore, represents the most anomalous architectural version in the South Indian style exclusively from the climatic point of view. Such examples stand testimony for the dominance of the traditional traits over the local needs which may arise due to micro-climatic situations. These individual traits of cella, which are more conducive to the North Western climate rather than to that of the South also indicate their original home. Thus there is enough evidence to corroborate the theory that cella originated from the Vedic Fire Altars and that the North-Western parts where the Aryan conquerors had settled down, had a climate which could have favoured the construction of cella in its present form. The extremes of climate in these regions could have necessitated their construction in a more compact manner. This construction principle of cella has been apparently adopted even in those zones where entirely different geo-climatic environment exists thanks to the fidelity to traditions.

CLASSIFICATION

A very common way by which the temple structures are classified is often based on the nature of the super-structures constructed over the cella. The North Indian temple which is often characterised by a spire which is conical, curvilinear and convex in form and is usually crowned by a vase-shaped member *kalasha* is referred to as Nagara.[1] The spire in South India, which exhibits a tower ascending in a series of horizontal terraces and is thus markedly different from Nagara, is called Dravida. Vesara, the third type of temple building, is characterized by its barrel-roof and is largely restricted to western India and Deccan.

The above system of classification, which is based on the geographical forms, although quite simple, is sometimes found inadequate mainly because of the size of the sub-continent and particularly because of the perplexing varieties of temple structures it exhibits. To overcome this problem an attempt has been made here to make a little more comprehensive system of classification of the temple structures by adopting the system of Vincent A. Smith who based his classification of the Hindu architectural styles on the basis of regional characteristics.

The Brahmanical forms of temples could accordingly be classified into two major groups : the cave and the structural temples. The structural temples could be further sub-divided into six categories. They are the four northern styles, the 'Indo-Aryan' of Fergusson, the Gupta, the Kashmiri and the Nepalese; and the two southern styles, the Dravidian and the 'Chalukyan' of Fergusson, better designated as Deccani.

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[1] Sometimes called 'Indo-Aryan'.

THE CAVE TEMPLES

The earliest historical caves—the Barabar group—in the Gaya district, can be placed in the period covered by the 12th to the 19th regnal years of Ashoka. These caves are excavated from monoliths of granite, whose frontage opens in a door with sloping jambs, evidently a replica of the prevailing wooden prototypes. They have full facial treatment of timber mode of construction, probably to relieve the blank and full face by creating shade and shadows on the surface. Both internally and externally they are plain in appearance and though the smallest, are the "least ornamented of any to be found in India". With such simple beginnings, the cave-architecture in India attained great skill and impressiveness as in Ellora.

Under the rule of Satavahanas in the Deccan and Andhra, Buddhist art found welcome patronage and the cave-temples of Kanheri (Bombay), Karle (Poona) and Nasik are the living examples. The architectural model in wood exerted a strong influence, and the monastic needs and guild workmanship combined to produce a unique form of cave-architecture. The Buddhist cave-temple was a complex of monastic residence and a place of meditation and worship, and these functional demands, evidently, exerted their controlling influence on the evolution of these excavated rock structures. The sites chosen for these cave-temples, as in Ajanta, would indicate a great appreciation of the beauties of nature on the part of those who founded this settlement. Though architecturally interesting, Ajanta is more famous for its frescoes which alongwith those at Bagh (in the former Gwalior state) and Sigiriya (in Sri Lanka) are all that remain of what once was a very extensive school of painting in ancient India.

The tradition of the Buddhist cave-temple and the monastery was carried on further through the ages, with the re-emergence of Brahmanism. The early promise of the capabilities of the Brahmanical cave-temple is revealed in the Badami caves of the imperial Chalukyas. This group consists of four caves which generally follow the earlier pattern of cave-architecture, but the pillars and capitals reveal some new trends. Of the four, Cave No. III is "by far the finest of the series" and one of the most interesting Brahmanical examples in India. But with Ellora comes the climax. Excavated from top downwards, the Kailashanatha temple is designed in the nature of a structural temple, plane upon plane and mass poised over mass. The *dasavatara* gallery showing the divine incarnations is a monument of great dramatic force emerging out of a totally inert matter. Hiding behind not a very pretentious façade, the Kailasha bursts into view with a powerful effect that bewitches the spectator. The entire sculpture is an embodiment of purposeful energy; "muscles swell and contract with dynamism that is utterly indescribable and the rock stands transformed into figures of cosmic force and purpose". Ellora is related to Pattadakkal and Badami and belongs to the style generally described as Dravidian, not so much in ethnic as in stylistic mannerism.[1]

THE STRUCTURAL TEMPLES

Ellora completes the transition of the excavated monastery to form the simulated structural temple. This tradition manifests itself further South in the *rathas* of Mahabalipuram. The excavated temple was now left behind, and structural edifices took their place. The lofty towers built tier upon tier, diminishing in size towards a summit, typify all the wealth and grandeur of the Pallava empire and the tradition was carried on to the Chola times. In northern India, this tradition is at its zenith in Konarak and Khajuraho.

Among the structural temples, distinct styles have been evolved which differentiate the Northern School from that of the South.

The 'Indo-Aryan' style is characterized by the bulging steeple with curvilinear outlines which surmounts the shrine or sanctuary containing the image and is frequently repeated in other parts of the design. The origin of the curvilinear steeple could be traced from the form of a frame of bamboos tied together at the top. As the development goes, there is a tendency to greatly diminish or even do away with the curvature of the outline and several later temples have slender straight-line spires somewhat resembling the shape of the church. The 'Indo-Aryan' style is common all over North India between the Himalayas and Vindhyas and most of them belong to the period from 900 to 1200 A.D. Some of such Orissan

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1. B.G. Gokhale, *Ancient India : History and Culture*, 1952.

versions are however supposed by Fergusson to date from 600 A.D. The temples at Khajuraho are literally covered with the finest sculptures. Many of the figures stand on their own platform and are carved almost completely on the round. The play upon curves and contours inject the figures with great vitality and warmth. The body is carved with considerable skill, emphasizing the fullness and roundness of the flesh, the breasts and belly contrasting with the exaggerated lines of the arms and legs. Some of these sculptures even depict erotic scenes reproduced from the treatise of Kamasutra.

The Gupta style is described to be characterized by seven salient features : (i) flat roofs resembling the cave temples (ii) prolongation of the head of the doorway beyond the jambs as in Egyptian temples (iii) statues of the rivergoddesses guarding the entrance gates (iv) pillars with massive square capitals ornamented with two lions back to back with a tree between them (v) bosses on the capital and freizes of very peculiar form, like Buddhist *stupas* or bee-hives with projecting horns (vi) continuation of the architrave of the portico as a moulding all round the building and (vii) deviation of plan from the cardinal points. This style of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. is found in southern parts of Uttar Pradesh and the neighbouring territories.

Another important, but unfortunately ill-preserved style of the northern temple architecture is from Kashmir. The monuments here and in the Salt Range country of Punjab between the Indus and the Jhelum exhibit characteristics like pyramidal roofs, fluted pillars closely resembling those of the Doric order, arches with trefoil-shaped openings and dentils as ornaments. The Greek character of the pillars has attracted much attention from the European writers. Le Bon opines that this style was introduced from Persia during the rule of Arsacids. This style was in vogue from 600 A.D. to 1200 A.D.

The Nepalese style, which is common in Nepal is basically a local modification of the Chinese school and is characterized by a massive roof with recurved edges resting upon short columns. This curvature, however, is less marked than in China.

Coming to the South Indian school, the Dravidian style, which is common in peninsular India to the south of the Krishna river, is characterized by four important parts : *Vimanas*, *mandapas*, *gopurams* and pillared halls or *choultries*. They belong to the period after the sixth century A.D. The Dravidian structural architecture in southern India culminated under the Chola dynasty which became paramount in power all over India as far north as the Ganges and extended its sway at one time as far as Sri Lanka and Burma. The Dravidian *vimana* of Brihadeshwara temple of Thanjavur (1000 A.D.) rises to a height of 216 feet and has fourteen storeys, finely decorated with pillars, niches and images of various sizes of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. The *shikhara*[1] or cupolic dome is octagonal in shape and crowns the *vimana*. It is believed that this does not throw a shadow on the ground. The dome rests on a single block of granite weighing about 80 tonnes, and is said to have been conveyed to the top of the tower by means of an inclined plane commencing from Sarapallam four miles away. Fergusson who has frequently observed that the Dravidian temples do not follow a plan has found an exception in Thanjavur. Here the temple was commenced on a well-defined and stately plan which was adhered to, till its completion.

Another gorgeous edifice in the South is the Meenakshi Temple of Madurai. This temple is veritably a city by itself. The immense courtyard surrounding the central shrine was designed to accommodate the crowds which would gather to see the processions, when the gods, like the temporal rulers, would be taken from their shrines and displayed to the public. The temple grounds are now surrounded by a massive boundary wall with immense portals surmounted by *gopurams* located at the cardinal points. The *gopurams* are rectangular, concave in profile and surrounded by hull-shaped roofs of the *vesara* type. The *gopurams* in their immense scale completely dwarf the central shrine within the temple enclosure.

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1. Here, the word *shikhara* is employed in a more general sense, without restricting it to the North Indian spire. In the architecture of the Dravidian India, the term *shikhara* is often applied only to the crowning member of the edifice.

The Deccani style (also called Chalukyan style) is, as Le Bon believes, somewhat transitional which forms a bridge between the northern and southern schools of architecture. One witnesses here a harmonious blend of these two great styles on the same area, very true to its geographical location which had to interact to the influences of both northern and southern cultures and civilizations. At the same time one finds here greater impact of the South rather than the North, perhaps again due to its geographical location, which made the North less accessible than the South. Here, the whole temple stands on a richly carved base, polygonal or stellate in plan, with a stepped conical roof not rising high enough to become a steeple and a peculiar vase-like ornament crowning the summit. The Bellary variety has a rectangular plan and the buildings would be classed more properly as Dravidian than as a sub-division of the Deccani style.

The sculptural forms of the Deccan were strongly influenced by the artistic style of the Pallavas. It is characterized by tall and slender figures which could be distinguished easily from their Orissan or Vindhyan counterparts. Female forms are slim, with narrow waists and small shoulders. The breasts are well-rounded but smaller. They wear fewer ornaments and garments. The male figure is somewhat heavier with broad shoulders, supported on an elongated torso. Less attention is paid to the expression of emotions through facial movements and more to pose and gestures. These descriptions apply both to human and divine forms. In fact this trait has been carried over for several centuries down South as one could see in the various bronze figures of later dates.

As we have already seen, the oldest stone temples of India belong to a period when Buddhism was at its zenith. The Hindu temples took a more durable shape only at a later date with the re-emergence of the Hindu religion thanks to the rich patronage of the Gupta dynasty. Construction pattern and technique of these Hindu Temples show a great deal of Buddhist influence. Buddhism was not, however, free from the Hindu impact. At the same time or even earlier the Hindu concepts had started making tremendous inroads into Buddhism which resulted in the emergence of a new Buddhist order, the Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhist structural influence is surprisingly more intense—as one could see it—on the South Indian super-structures. The spires of the Shore Temples at Mahabalipuram belonging to the mid-7th Century A.D. which form the precursors to the later versions of *vimana* strikingly indicate the inspiration drawn from the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhgaya. The latter, which dates back to the King Ashoka's regime, is supposed to be the only surviving example of hundreds of such *viharas* that existed in the Gangetic plains. It was constructed around the *vajrasana*, the Throne of Enlightenment of the Buddha, consisting of seven storeys which used to accommodate monks and scholars. What was an utilitarian form of architecture in the hands of the Buddhists became totally aesthetic in the hands of the Pallavas who had ignored the functional aspects altogether. The Shore Temples thus depict a non-functional *vimana* which merely pretends to have several storeys.

The more recent versions of temples found all over India cannot be strictly classified in the above manner since there are several possibilities of overlapping of certain characteristics due to interaction between different cultures and intermingling of people belonging to different regions.

III

Foundations

THE CONCEPTS

Any religious art form, temple being no exception, has its foundation on both faith as well as the aesthetic notions of the population. When the religious faith finds its expression in an aesthetically pleasing manner, a religious art is born. In India any traditional art form depicts a religious background without which perhaps it could not have withstood the torrents of Time. Among the two, *viz.*, faith and aesthetics, it seems that while there is a sort of permanence in the case of faith, the aesthetic values *per se* seem to be highly volatile and fluid. In order to inject certain stability into aesthetic concepts, perhaps, binding them with a deep-rooted faith, was necessary. This hybridization between aesthetics and faith has brought about such a tremendous durability into the religious art forms, so that they could withstand the pressures of changes in Time. As a result, India's religious art traditions are preserved almost in their pristine forms even today. Whether it is music or dance, sculpture or painting, architecture or art, the ancient Indian civilization has a distinct stamp of its own in all these fields.

Hinduism, like any other Indian religion born in the sub-continent shows a high degree of evolution in its conceptions. The four features of any developed religion *viz.*, philosophy, epic, mythology and rituals[1] find their expression in religious buildings as well. The

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[1] V.A.K. Ayer, *Hindu Shastras and Sanskaras*, Bombay, 2nd Edition, 1976.

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1. V.A.K. Ayer, ***Hindu Shastras and Sanskaras***, Bombay, 2nd Edition, 1976.

basic philosophy of the Hindus which equates self with the Universe and which does not envisage the necessity of congregational form of worship is reflected in the architectural execution of the Hindu temple. The *garbhagriha* is often small, dark, inconspicuous, simple and cannot accommodate even a handful of people within its precincts. Although later developments in the Hindu temple architecture included the construction of several *mandapas*, facilities for congregational worship are totally absent in a majority of them. A striking difference becomes evident when the architectural style of the Hindu *garbhagriha* is compared with the Buddhist *chaitya*-halls, which are often spacious and are constructed in such a fashion that a number of worshippers could be accommodated together at a time.

While spiritual ideals and philosophical concepts were propagated through standard religious texts, mythological stories and symbols, being the most easily assimilable forms of religious preachings even for the illiterate masses, were handed over from one generation to another through the media of fine arts. Scenes from epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* adorn the religious art forms almost in every corner of India. Early *rathas* of Pallavas at Mahabalipuram are dedicated to the characters from *Mahabharata*. Wall paintings from Ajanta reveal the characters from the Jataka tales : Visvantara Jataka, Shaddanta Jataka, Shyama Jataka, Sutasama Jataka etc. The rich heritage in epic and mythology has provided inexhaustible source of themes and ground-materials for the Indian religious artist, which are narrated or represented through literature, sculpture, painting, music and dance in different styles and mannerisms, peculiar to different parts of the country.

PSI

"Psi" (the Greek letter ψ), which was recommended by Dr. Thouless to designate the faculty of telepathy, clairvoyance, clair-audience, clair-sentience, extra-sensory perception (ESP), para-normal cognition (PNC) etc. and which embraces all of these phenomena is supposed to represent a fundamental relationship of mental rapport between the so-called individual mind and the sustained thought of a Divine or cosmic mind. For a general discussion on the foundation of a religion, it seems relevant to have a preliminary idea on the role that "psi" plays. We would have to speculate freely today to try to conceive how mankind's earliest experiences of these psychic abilities took hold and became seriously considered. But we can tell something about this from the use made of these assumed psychic powers in various cultures, especially in their religions and their practice of rituals.

The Indian religions best illustrate this and in a way, the part that "psi" plays represents the greatest use it has yet been given in human affairs.[1] The entire element of the supernatural and the miraculous in a religion is almost identical with the supposition of unlimited "psi" ability on the divine level. The assumption that deities had omniscience and omnipotence was the equivalent of attributing to them supreme powers of extra-sensory perception (ESP) and psycho-kinesis (PK) ability. There would have been no need to develop a theology that limited its deities to the sensorimotor range of man himself, because it must be supposed that in every culture there was ample awareness of the extra-sensory and extramotor experiences that were probably always common enough among all men. In any case, it is belief in the powers of "psi" that has given the founders of the religions their ideas as to the forms of communication between the human and the divine. There is, of course, a great deal more to religion than these models of interaction, but it is significant that what have come to be called the sub-types of "psi" in parapsychology, match closely such terms of religious communication, as prayer, revelation, prophecy, and the various types of physical miracles.

It is a good question whether without this application of their belief in "psi" ability, man could have developed powerful systems of belief that gave to morality the authority of divine command. Without the concept of some kind of extraphysical or spiritual principle to interact with the meterial system of the body, it seems doubtful whether a sense of moral control over the physical functions of life could ever have been achieved. At any rate it seems fairly certain that these religious (or moral) aspects owed much indeed to the powers of "psi".[1]

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[1] Authors like R.C. Johnson, however, do not seem to subscribe to such views which try to point out any relationship between psychical research and religion. Viewing the human self as a kind of hierarchy or synthesis of many different levels of reality—physical, aetheric, emotional, mental, intuitive, transcendent (or, spiritual), Johnson opines that psychical phenomena are concerned with the lower levels of personality and the insights of religion are concerned with higher levels.

Any discussion on psi, without referring to the Indian concepts of *bhakti* and meditation, which have certain inter-links among them, could be incomplete. *Bhakti* or personal adoration is a singular religious concept which makes the devotee completely wedded to devotion and love even to the extent of his losing individuality in the wholeness of the Universe. In fact, it is this *bhakti* which leads to meditation or *samadhi*. The station given to meditation in Indian faith is very high. Meditation is distinguished from mere thinking.[2] It is the highest kind of prayer to which it is more closely allied than it is to thinking. In thinking, one actively directs one's mind to relevant facts drawing conclusions from the relations between them; in meditation one turns one's soul passively to the world of spirit, concentrating on a problem and courting what God (or Reality) may disclose. Thinking is directed by the will of man, which guides the mind; meditation requires subordination of man's will to the Will of God (or Reality). The mind is at rest in meditation; but just as the will of man is never wholly subjected to the Will of God, so the mind of man is never wholly at rest. Meditation and mental activity alternate causing traces of meditation to illumine thought processes .and thought to help understanding of knowledge acquired in meditation.

Although for a self-realizing meditator external objects like icon or temple could seem to be quite extraneous and superficial, nevertheless they constantly remind of the Universal Spirit. They could perhaps also be used as symbols for concentration.

1. Richard Cavendish (Ed), *Encyclopaedia of the Unexplained : Magic, Occultism and Parapsychology*, London, 1974.
2. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life*, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore.

MYTH

Another feature that is closely linked with the psychical zone of belief is the association of myth with religious ceremonies. Many religions offer examples of the rite as the rehearsal of the events of a myth. Thus some scholars hold that in ancient religions, myth took the place of dogma. They not only serve a religious purpose, but also an explanatory or etiological one *i.e.* the mythmaker's attempt to explain natural phenomena in terms of personifications. Thus, in a wider sense myth is a symbolical narrative or picture representing a cosmic process or, for the individual, a psychological state. The study and interpretation of myths, or mythology, probably began in the 4th Century B.C. when Euhemerus explained myths as exaggerated adventures of historical individuals. Thus mythological personages such as Zeus were considered to have been at one time men who after death had been glorified, then deified. In the late eighteenth century, there was a great burst of interest in myths, directed mainly at discovering common origins. Jean Sylvian Bailly was a prominent figure. Max Müller, who began modern investigation believed that myths were linguistic corruptions. For instance, the phrase "sunrise follows dawn" spoken in Greek could be interpreted as meaning Apollo pursues Daphne, the maiden of the dawn. The allegorical interpretation of myths indicates that originally myths were invented by wisemen to point out truth, but after a time myths were taken literally, *e.g.* Cronus, who devoured his own children is identified with Greek word for time, which may be said to destroy whatever it brings into existence. Theological interpretation states that all myths are foreshadowing of facts of the Scripture or corruptions of them. While the Freudian school explained myths as a mechanism of wish-fulfillment, the Jungian school denoted them as the expression of the unconscious dreams of people.

Indian mysticism—and Hinduism in particular, clothes its statements in the form of myths, using metaphors and symbols, poetic images, similies and allegories. Mythical language is much less restricted by logic and common sense. It is full of paradoxical situations, rich in suggestive images and never precise and can thus convey the way in which mystics experience reality much better than any factual language.

The fertile Indian imagination has created a vast number of gods and goddesses whose incarnations and exploits are the subjects of fantastic tales, collected in epics of huge dimensions. The Hindu with a deep insight knows that all these gods are creations of the mind, mythical images representing the many faces of reality. On the other hand he also knows that they were not merely created to make the stories more attractive, but are essential vehicles to convey the doctrines of a philosophy rooted in mystical experience.[1]

MYTHOGENESIS AND EVOLUTION IN MYTHOLOGY

The evolutionary tendency has not been exclusively limited to the religious constructions alone. Such a process has been witnessed even in conceptual level. By taking up the attributes to the gods individually, one could visualize a process of evolution in Vedic mythology.[2]

A certain God may have been ruling supreme in certain specific period but subsequently due to different vicissitudes, some other God gradually takes over the supreme place. In this process personalities get highly complex and heterogeneous. Let us take for instance, the case of the supreme God of the pre-Vedic Aryans, Varuna, who is represented as a peace-loving God and who blessed his people with peace and prosperity. But in due course the most adventurous among them started moving out of their original homeland towards west, south and south-west. The hordes which came to the present day Iran perhaps met with very little resistance to their advance but the lot which came to the Indus valley had to face stiff opposition from the local people who had at that time a flourishing civilization of their own. This meant fighting and Varuna was found inadequate in such a situation. Perhaps there was a mighty warrior among the incoming hordes who was not only a valiant fighter but also a hard drinker of Soma juice. He must have won for them their wars and obtained stable footholds for them. In course of time this warrior was elevated to Godhood and was called Indra who ultimately superseded Varuna.

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1. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, 1975.
2. R.N. Dandekar, *Vedic Mythological Tracts*, (Select Writings-I), Delhi.

This explains why in the pre-Vedic period the name of Indra was not found. He comes much later in the Vedic lore. Similarly the Gods Savitr, Pusan etc. who were high in the hierarchy at one time or another were relegated to the background when Indra came up. On the other hand, Vishnu, who occupied a minor role in pre-Vedic and early Vedic mythology was elevated to his present high position in Hindu religion, very much later when fertility rites assumed importance.

Vedic mythology could not completely isolate itself from an already well-established civilization of the Indus valley and adjoining regions. The Vedic people were compelled by force of circumstances to absorb some of the local culture, the most prominent of it being the worship of Shiva and the Mother Goddess. The Indus valley God Shiva was a terrible personality lording over everyone including thieves and dacoits. At the same time he was also a beneficient physician and healer. He was represented by the phallus symbol for worship and blood was the offering made to him. All these were quite alien to the Vedic Aryans, but as already indicated Shiva was to be included in their pantheon as Rudra with slightly more polished attributes. For example, the function of death was transferred to Yama from Rudra. Yama was originally a 'path-finder' for men to enter the heavens. It is interesting to note that Yama together with Yami, his sister, were the first parents of human race, an analogy to the Biblical characters, Adam and Eve.

With the absorption of Rudra and the Mother Goddess, the custom of *puja* had also to be absorbed.[1]

The non-existence of temples consecrated to the pre-Vedic and early Vedic gods indicates how powerful the influence of later Vedic gods has been on temple worshippers.

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1. In pre-Vedic Sanskrit language, there is no equivalent for the word *puja*. It is thought to be derived from the Tamil word *pusu* which means smear and which indicated the practice of smearing the blood of the sacrificed animals on the phallus-shaped icon, and the word *siva* also indicated the red colour. The word *puja* was taken in to the Sanskrit language much later in Vedanga period by Panini.

SYMBOLS

The developmental process of human civilization, as manifested in the long history of religious and magical art, has been actively associated with the lavish use of symbols which generally imply something vague, unknown or hidden. What we call a symbol is a term, a name or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. More often a symbol has a wider "unconscious" aspect—as Dr. Carl Jung[1] would put it—that is never precisely defined or fully explained. "Nor can one hope to define or explain it." But as the mind explores a symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason.

The investigations of Sir James Frazer in comparative religion and those of Sigmund Freud in psychology, extreme though they may be, have shown that human beings tend always to use a wide symbolism, even in thinking itself, to cover ideas they avoid out of fear, propriety or some other motive. Symbolism has always played an important role not only in religion but in visual arts as well. This is mainly due to the ease and flexibility with which they are able to adopt and convey the opposing currents and contradictions inherent within the object itself. One theory holds that these contradictions could be understood only as a symbol namely as a visual representation of the mathematically insoluble problem.

There is no doubt in saying that no religion could reach its zenith without exploitation and employment of the media of symbols. The need of symbols in religion could be mainly due to deficiencies found in plain verbal communications. The highly complex metaphysical and mystic phenomena that religions crave to highlight to attract both intellectual and layman alike into its fold could find an effective expression only through the medium of symbols. Elements of

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1. Carl. G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious" from *Man and His Symbols* Ed. by Carl G. Jung, 1964.

uncertainty in their meaning do shroud them with the required mystery which could impart a sense of awe or wonder.

Hinduism which had the biggest followers comprising of common people, most of them illiterate, did evidently require a massive dose of symbols in the form of words, icons, images and what not. Symbols were effectively employed for communication with common man who otherwise had no access to the great, intellectual treatises on ethics, philosophy or metaphysics. They were interpreted and re-interpreted by the devotees in an endless fashion as one could see in the religious developmental process in India. They were in no way, definitive. The differences in their interpretation did, however, in no way, affect the one universal truth. Each interpretation represented a *darshana* or a viewpoint. Since there are many ways of viewing one's experience, the different *darshanas* need not be incompatible. They are just pointers on the way to spiritual realisation. If religious truth is seen by different groups in different ways it is not to deny that truth is ultimately one.[1]

While the language could directly and abruptly convey the sense, symbol being a potential medium for infinite *darshanas* provided an insatiable scope for imagination, interpretation and innovation. Moreover, it was also considered as a necessary and helpful intermediary between the inadequate capacity of the mind of the would-be worshipper and the incommunicable nature and the fullness of the Absolute. It used material or sentient things to point out a significant underlying order to things. It also sought to make definite approach to the reality by suggestive type—an approach that can never find its goal but can only draw nearer and nearer the larger part of reality which in its entirety is inconceivable by the human mind and hence inexpressible in the analytical language of man.

Symbol which was used for denoting the Brahman could belong to this category. The names or titles of Brahaman, the undefinable and unknowable, origin and source of all are symbolic : 'Hiranyagarbha' refers to the golden germ that was in the beginning; 'Swayambhu', the self-existent one; 'Vishvakarman', the artificer of all things; 'Sachitananda', a combination of Being, Thought and Bliss, etc.

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[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith*, 1967.

The ancient system of Indian iconography, very much like its western counterpart, was governed by a 'sacred' mathematics in which position, grouping, proportion, symmetry and number were of extraordinary symbolic importance and were themselves an integral part of iconography. From earliest times, the Christian iconography has likewise been a symbolic code showing men one thing and inviting them to see in it the figure of another (for instance, the dove which figures the Holy Spirit). Form was, thus, merely a vehicle of spiritual meaning. Such symbolism was all-pervasive in the Indian religious thought and it is, therefore, not surprising that there was a great deal of symbolism connected with temple structures as well.

The Hindu temple is believed to represent a human body. This reflects the old and almost universal doctrine of basic correspondence between man and cosmos—man as microcosmos and cosmos as macroanthropos which was also found expressed both in theoretical expression and practical application in Tantric yoga. A popular Sanskrit saying *kshetram sarira prastaram* also conveys that temples were made in the form of human body.

The direction that a temple faces is often considered very significant. Usually, a temple faces the east, the place of the rising sun. Its entrance depicts the figures of the river goddesses, Ganga and Jamuna. For those who enter into a temple, the actual bath is compensated by the *darshan* of these river goddesses. There are also geometric motifs, notably the Universal theme of architecture called "double spiral"—also propagated in India as in the Roman art. The ups and downs of these curves symbolically represent the birth and death concept.

Growing symbolic importance came to be attached to the temple structures as they underwent the process of evolution. Thus the main cella, considered as the most important and the holiest part, to which all structures are subordinate came to be known as *garbhagriha* which would literally mean a house of embryo. For, here it was believed that the higher self of the devotee is reborn through initiation.

The addition of circumambulatory path or *pradkshina patha* around the cella also has a significant symbolic meaning. Ambulation around the temple was considered as perambulation of the entire Universe itself. In the Buddhist stupa of Sanchi the ritual of circumambulation was performed by entering the precinct through the east gate and walking clock-wise. This direction related the devotee's movements with the passage of the Sun (east, south & west) and put him in complete harmony with the cosmos. In fact, his involvement with the stupa was a bodily engagement within a gigantic three-dimensional *mandala* or sacred diagram of the cosmos which slowly and systematically transported him from the mundane world into the spiritual one.

The addition of super-structures also involves its own symbolic sense. The North Indian curvilinear *shikhara* was equated with the mythological mount Meru on which the gods lived. The *shikhara* of the Kandariya Mahadeva Temple at Khajuraho is a veritable mountain, so aesthetically conceived. This temple shows a high degree of evolution, where the *shikhara* is composed of eighty-five flanking vertical structures, with the tallest central peak right in the centre, recalling the masculinity of this great mythological mountain range.

Vimanas of the South Indian temples have also got an esoteric significance. Their different stages suggest the man's ascent in his spiritual quest since the Vedanta preaches that a man should pass over his envelopes of desires, sufferings and joys to elevate himself to the supreme degree of knowledge, to achieve the super-human state of union with the Universal Spirit, the *moksha*.

In ancient days, Hindu temples were constructed as temporary or renewable sheds employing softer media such as wood, bamboos, leaves, clay, mud etc. With the beginning of stone constructions lightness gave way to strength, freshness to maturity, temporariness to durability. This medium change indicates social, cultural, economic and psychological transformations during this period. Socially the people started having a more settled life, and urban centres started mushrooming. Economically speaking, the people belonging to this period could shell out means not only for the transport of heavy boulders from distant quarries but also could provide the long-time employment for stone-cutters, sculptors, masons and other professionals such as priests, gardeners, sweepers, flower-vendors and so on. Psychologically, the erection of temples indicated a sense of permanence to the citizens. Generations came and passed by but temple stood in its place serving the spiritual need. The stone monuments could usher in the required aura of grandeur, permanence, and majesty which the extravert and masculine Middle Ages very much wanted to project. The switchover from the softer media to the more durable stone media also conveys an orientation towards more mundane and materialistic traits in religions.

The complexity in structural development of temples becomes evident when one observes how from a simple cubical sanctum, the temple structure evolved into a very complex township with concentric walls and a number of pillared porches, vestibules, turrets etc. The structural expansions with sculptural intricacies indicate the desire of the religionists to bring in a sense of regard, mystery and awe in the minds of the followers. The manifestations of over-powering grandeur, thrilling magnificence, complex artistry and affluence besides exuberant charm in the temple forms at Khajuraho, Bhubaneshwar, Kashmir, Ellora, Mount Abu, Thanjavur, Madurai, Belur, Halebid, Srirangam (to cite only a few places), no doubt, create a sense of awe in the minds of the visitors.

AESTHETICS

Like symbols, aesthetics has a postive role in the development of religious art forms. Several fine arts are the realization or expression of beauty through their media : wood, stone, clay, pigments, gesture or sound. The province of aesthetics is to determine the nature of beauty in general and the laws governing its expression in a concrete medium. It also embraces all the arts as well as the principles underlying the works of critics of painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music or dance.

On the nature of beauty, there are two types of thought—the objective, generally maintaining that beauty inheres in the external object, and the subjective, generally maintaining that beauty depends solely upon the perception of the observer. There are innumerable shades of variations between these two poles. A popular Tamil pun which describes how one could interpret a stone-statue of a dog : "one who sees the dog, does not find the stone and the one who sees the stone does not find the dog!"

A theory of aesthetics is an essential part of any complete philosophic theory and almost every philosopher has attempted to draw up his own laws of beauty, the most interesting ones being those of Plato, Aristotle, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Hegel, Bosanquet, Fechner and in recent years Croce and Santayana—to mention just a few names.

What could be the forms that are supposed to impart aesthetic values to things or render them expressive? And how are we to recognize their presence?

Clive Bell who confined himself to works of visual arts, in his theory of "Significant Forms", concluded that when lines and colours are combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms stir our aesthetic emotions. Though Bell thought that his account could also be extended to music, it was Mrs. Langer who took up this challenge. She endeavoured to show that music is a "Significant Form" in the peculiar sense of the word "significant" which Bell and Fry had maintained. It is, she says, "formulation and representation" of emotions, moods, mental tensions and resolutions—a "logical picture" of sentient responsive life.

Experimental psychology can reveal certain forms which we endeavour to find in our fields of vision, certain principles of grouping which we try out before others. Things which exemplify these forms or which can be grouped according to these principles, should be aesthetically pleasing. However, there remains the question why they are pleasing, since most of those who are pleased will never have heard of these forms or principles. Most of the aestheticians (including Kant) would hesitate to lean at all heavily on empirical psychology. The basic schemata of sense experience, they would say, are too basic and too universal to be discovered empirically. And they certainly cannot be discovered in scientific or discursive language. Aesthetic theories of Benedetto Croce and Henri Bergson are therefore, based on importance of intuition rather than intellect.

In so far as Indian versions of the aesthetic theory are concerned, Natya Shastra (Treatise on Dramaturgy) of Bharata (second century B.C.), a manual of dance and dramatic art, can perhaps be cited as a work which introduced the concept of *rasa* (savor) and which elaborately dealt with medieval aesthetic analysis. It stands for the feeling or sentiment that pervades a work of art or is aroused in the contemplator. The types of *rasas* are : romantic love, heroism, abhorrence, anger, merriment, terror, compassion, wonder, and holy peace. Their nature was, however, disputed. Some critics like Bhatta Lollita, (ninth century A.D.) held that they reside primarily in the persons represented in drama, for example, or in the objects of the works of art and secondarily in the performance of the artists; but for Sankuka (ninth century) *rasa* is the intensified emotion experienced by the viewer. Bhatta Nayaka (tenth century) held that *rasa* is a unique form of delight unconnected with a particular ego, whether real or imitated. Aesthetic enjoyment is not related to the aims and concerns of one's day-to-day life and is evoked by art objects which express universal moods in an ideal way. Thus, all the emotions presented in art are transferred to a supermundane plane, and the so-called enjoyment comes to represent a unique category of experience unlike anything that is known to result from ordinary worldly pleasures. This universalization and sublimation also dissociates the emotion from its particularised form *e.g.*, love etc. so that it is relished simply as aesthetic emotion (*rasa*).

This theory was further developed by Abhinavagupta (eleventh century A.D.). In accordance with these notions, a distinction was made between the "body" and "soul" of aesthetic works. Thus a work of art could present : (i) information (ii) imaginative thoughts and (iii) savor. The first is unimportant, for art is concerned with what is neither true nor false. The imaginative presentation is of course, a means of evoking *rasa* in the contemplator; and thus "savor" stands out as the "soul" of art.

Although all these views suggest that aesthetic work should not be didactic, nevertheless, they have a general spiritual significance. Thus from the point of view of Advaita, aesthetic contemplation gives a foretaste of release, to those who are unable to attain the higher insight and detachment. Through this people are taken out of their day-to-day problems; they see the aesthetic object as hovering between existence and non-existence and they partake of the delight or bliss which characterizes ultimate reality (the self or Brahman).

It may be noted that these developments in aesthetics involved a drift towards a subjectivist account of the essence of art, and thus it was held both that the poet has to use indirect means in evoking *rasa* (this could not, like imaginative thoughts, be directly communicated) and that appreciation by the viewer is itself a form of creativity.

Thanks to the archaeologists, it is now clear that in India, aesthetic conceptions had become quite highly developed even in 3000 B.C. The Indus artist loved to cover up the entire surface of his object, whether it be a dish, bowl, a globular pot or an elongated vase. The designs were executed in black over a dark red slip. They consisted ordinarily of foliate or geometric designs, among which the most striking were the "interlocking circle", "vase", "bangle" "comb" and "scale" motifs. Animal motifs are rare, although not altogether uncommon. They are drawn fairly accurately but not quite realistically. The flora identified are the date palm, the pipal and the acacia. The geometric motif consists of triangles, (single and double) chequers, "hide" motif, cross-like designs, the comb motif, the bangle motif, sun motif etc. A large number of small statues and female figures which would possibly represent the mother-goddesses not too different from those found in other early cultures, excavated in these sites give an insight of the great aesthetic sense prevailing over that period. Displaying wide hips and ample breasts bedecked with heavy jewellery, they are the precursors of the Indian conception of feminine beauty which was to be developed in the later Mauryan art and celebrated further in the exquisite *shalabhanjikas* and *yakshis*. The posture of a unique small copper sculpture of a young woman, perhaps a dancing girl from Mohen-jo-daro "completely sophisticated and very much urban in silhouette and hauteur", standing nude except for a brief necklace and an arm completely ringed with bangles, with her relaxed body twisting so that one hand rests on her right hip while the other holds a small bowl against her left leg with a charming accent on bents and angles of the limbs is virtually the forerunner to later *tribhanga* forms in female sculptures whose angled arms and legs could imitate perennial motion. This could be a striking instance which proves that the Harappan culture was not completely lost and some of its elements did survive through the passage of time subtly to touch the later periods of Indian history, although authors like Smith[1] may opine that it is not easy to fit in the artistic achievements of the Indus valley culture, such as they be with the main trend of the development of Indian art from the Mauryan period onwards.

The Mauryan art forms are characterised by grandeur, high engineering skill, precision of execution and the unique surface gloss, popularly known as the 'Mauryan Polish'. Sarnath depicts strong evidence of Persian or, more exactly, Achaemenid influence.

One of the most impressive monuments remaining from the late Shunga period is the rock-cut Buddhist worship hall (*chaitya*) at Bhaja, which dates from about the middle of the second century BC. More than twelve hundred such rock-cut chambers, large and small were to be carved by the Buddhists, Jains and Hindus in the centuries to come and these monuments constitute a unique episode in Indian art. They are more abundant in western India.

[1] Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon.*

The Kushan period witnessed two great schools of Indian Art namely, the Gandhara and Mathura which depict two entirely different experimentations in the early art forms, which came to influence the later Gupta art forms in a great way. While the Gandhara art is characterised by a dominant foreign influence, perhaps due to its strategic position on the trade routes, not unlike the imperial Mauryan stone work, the Mathura school had almost everything which cropped up from within the country. The treatment of the same subject under these two art forms enables one to appreciate the basic differences between the two. The realism of the body-enveloping robe, which is a most common characteristic in the Gandharan art is quite un-Indian in concept and execution. The Hellenized stone-carvers who were commissioned by the Kushans drew directly upon their past experiences in providing standing portraits of nobility, fashioned after the images of the Roman emperors. To these images were added the Persian solar disc, as a halo of deification and the typical Indian postures (for instance, the most common posture of the Buddha seated as a *yogi*) and gestures of hands representing the various symbolic *mudras*. At the same time when the Buddha icon emerged in Gandhara several portraits of Buddha based upon *yaksha* models began to be created in the Mathura atelier.

Temple figures of Mathura exhibit the emphasized fertility principles—full bust and heavy breasts contrasting with slender waist and sideward thrust of the hip elevated into an aesthetic canon—the same elements which have rendered a perennial charm to the *shalabhanjikas* of Sanchi. These elements were carried down through the centuries not only in central and North Indian art forms but also in the Chalukyan and Dravidian sculptures and reliefs.

It was under the various national dynasties that an aesthetic ideal which may be called Indian took definitive shape, by developing the indigenous elements existing at Bharhut and Sanchi and adopting the foreign elements of Gandhara.[1] This aesthetic ideal was already present in the earlier art of Mathura which was contemporary with that of Gandhara.

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[1] René Grousset, *The Civilization of the East : India*, Delhi, 2nd Edition, 1969.

The Indian aesthetic ideal presupposes a philosophy similar to the Greek aesthetic canon, but which no sooner became familiar with it than it divorced itself from it and created for itself a canon of equal value. Thus in shaking itself free from the Greek classicism Gupta art gave birth to a new classicism which based its plastic conventions not only upon a knowledge of Indian customs and conditions but also upon a clear understanding of the Indian body itself.

It did away with the draperies which were to be indicated merely by the "liquid undulations—one might almost call them ripples—of a diaphanous garment which seems to cling to the limbs as though wet."

In expressing the perspectives and proportions it took its measurements, not from the geometrical criteria of the Greeks but from the living curves found in nature—"in the habit of growth of a flower, in the flowing movement of the animal from beneath its fur or hide."

Thus Indian sculptures distinguish themselves from those of the classical and Hellenic Greek schools in the absence of emphasis placed on carving the intricate details of the muscles, tendons and various sections of the anatomy. The Indian sculptor deemed it unnecessary to use such an elaborate system and found it sufficient to divide the body into sections which were complete in themselves. The human sculptures were mostly concerned not as anatomical studies of the human body but rather as essays in stylizing the symbolic essence of human life at its most vital apogee. These idealized bodies are full-figured and firmly fleshed, and they graphically display the Indian quality of inner breath (*prana*) which grants them complete harmony with the robust fertility of all nature and the earth.

It is noteworthy here that the form, the description and the dimensions—all were dictated by the Sanskrit canonical texts. The connection between the poetical thought and practical expression was greatly emphasized. It is somewhat bizarre since the abstract idea could become a practical possibility in this system. The canonical text of Pratimamanalakshanam and Vishnudharmottara a dictated in poetical terms what shape and form the figure should take. These descriptions are made in metaphorical style and compared with ideals of beauty, form and texture drawn from nature and elsewhere. For instance, the eyes of an *apsara* should resemble the silver fishes, her shoulder and arm the elephant's trunk and her expression of apprehension like 'fish in a dark pool' and so on.

As to the favourite pose of the body and especially of the female body, It was that of the "three bendings" (*tribhanga*)—*i.e.* with the head inclined towards the right (in female statues), and the bust turned towards the left, while, with the Indian predilection for a sideward thrust of the hip, the legs would again turn towards the right. The pose of male statues would be exactly opposite, the head being inclined towards the left and so forth.

These medieval aesthetic traits definitely infused a fresh life into the Indian art. From that time onwards for over ten centuries to follow, it was to be inspired by a supreme sense of rhythmic beauty. The figure became prominent and all other decorative motifs secondary. An expression of supreme spiritual calmness were lent to the images of the Buddha of this period. Preference was given to the youthful forms as the canons prescribed that gods and goddesses should always be shown in forms of perpetual youth. This was applied to all images whether Brahmanical, Buddhist or Jain. All superfluous jewellery and ornaments popular in the earlier periods, were removed. Great emphasis was placed on the continuation and smooth flow of the lines and contours.

The Indian sculpture had adopted a method of strip cutting, which involved cutting a stone in a series of facets, running in a continuous band from the top to the bottom of the figure. The various sections of the sculpture were made to join on to each other, with only subtle linear junctions between the two masses. Each shape was an entity in itself. The whole appearance of Indian sculpture is one of supreme simplicity of form. The lesser details were never allowed to overpower the major shape. Ornaments were often reduced to patterns that were incised or raised on the major areas without altering their form. Clothing too is shown as a mere appendage to the sculpture and does not in any way interfere with the basic form. This is never more clearly shown than in the sculpture of the Gupta period, where the figures appear to be almost nude, with the clothes clinging to the body, emphasising the primary form.

The Indian sculptor never used claws, bullnoses or gouges; his only tools were flat chisels and points. Although some examples give the appearance of being carved in the round they were still related to a ground. This is mainly because they were an integral part of the sculptural decoration to temples and secondly because of the Indian sculptors' emphasis on the convexity of the figure.

Nature is another significant contributor to the Indian aesthetics. The tropical wealth of scenic natural beauty in which India abounds serves as a fitting back-drop to Indian artistic and literary imagery. Although nature has profoundly inspired art and literature, it is its actual participation and interaction with human experience and the resulting human involvement which has led to sublime heights.

IV

Finish

Religious art forms, as we have already seen, are based on the inspirations drawn from not only man's faith but also his aesthetic ideals. In the evolutionary history, the most primitive religious art form could have been possibly an icon : a plain stone or an image which was to represent god or nature. Even in today's India, just a massive block of stone, unchiselled or untracted by man's hands, when believed to be sacred, is found worshipped. This could have been in vogue during the first few stages of development in icon-worship, soonafter the early nature-worshipper tried to divert his attention to symbols and cult-images, in preference to visualizing the immensity of nature around him as was done uptil now. This is very interesting. From divergently meandering over the vastness of the Universe or nature around him, the worshipper's mind could have found it more convenient to concentrate convergently on a symbol or image which could well be within his mental reach. It is this stage of transition which has led to the invention of icon, which could be the first physical manifestation given to the new concepts in man's mind. It is a remarkable development in the sense that it is the phenomenal object rather than the physical object which matters here, and whose value has come to be cherished for several centuries.

One of the several possible justifications that could explain the need for icons (or temples, for that matter) could be based on the fact that the Indian thought and philosophy has sought to constantly relate the biological and psychical microcosm to the macrocosm. This Vedic conception in metaphysics and its influence on the earlier tribal cults must have brought out the various forms for icons, symbols, temples, etc. Morever, there is an inner urge in man to communicate to his fellow-beings his feelings and beliefs either directly or indirectly (through the media of fine arts etc.) which is but natural for, primarily man is a communicating "animal; self-communication is being alive, communicating to others, the assertion of one's livingness".[1]

A form, particularly a religious art form, whether it is a temple or a song has to invariably constitute two inter-linked aspects *viz.* a physical aspect, which is concerned with a medium—a stone, a sound or a gesture and a mental aspect reflecting the aesthetic sensibilities of personality in developing this medium so as to ensure an inner awakening, an orientation of conciousness or an 'altered state or consciousness', (which is supposed to be the essence of any artistic or religious experience) on the part of the person who witnesses it.

In so far as the development of religious art forms are concerned, there is no ambiguity that the conceptualizations of the ancient civilizations in India which gave shape to the forms of icons did not just stop abruptly there. Very much like the forms, the underlying cenceptions have also undergone an evolutionary process. As the need for 'housing' the icon arose, either under the shades of holy trees, or inside the groves or caves or in shelters made of wood, brick or stone, elaborate rites were brought in, once again based on certain conceptualizations and each structure, (although conceived as less important than icons) developed in due course, was to be invariably assigned with one or other religious purpose.

Such an expression of deep religious insights in an aesthetically acceptable manner was something quite unique in the Indian sub-continent. According to Wheeler,[2] the aim of life is the development of ability to interpret experience to the end of perceiving reality and that this reality is something which cannot be measured, analysed,

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1. Frank Avray Wilson, *Art as Understanding*, London, 1963.
2. R. Wheeler, "*Man, Nature and Art*, 1968.

reduced to constitutent parts or embalmed in a set of rules. It is something which is perceived through the work of art, through religion, through science or through the act of profoundly living. The outcome of such a deliberate effort through religious art has to be beyond the ordinary cultivation of the aesthetic instincts necessary to all artistic appreciation. There is a spiritual insight or culture needed if we are to enter into the whole meaning of Indian religious artistic creation, otherwise we get only at surface external things or at the most, at things only just below the surface. It is an intuitive and spiritual art and must be seen with the intuitive and spiritual eye.[1]

The very fact that all religious art forms have a basis of aesthetics in their revelations depicts the underlying motion of pleasure. They represent an outcome of synthesis of judgements, attitudes, pleasures, activities held together not by some single thread running through them all, but by a web of limited resemblances and affinities and these are the business of any religious artist. Striking a balance here is often to be determined by the moods of the religious artist and the approach of the local populations. Thanks to the emergence of Tantric concepts in India, whose chief principle revolves around the sublimation of the creative energy which in its gross form is represented by the erotic instinct, the involvement of pleasure has been uninhibitedly exploited in Indian religious art forms whether in praising the Lord as sung by Jayadeva or in carving out human and animal figures as found around temples as at Khajuraho or Konarak.

Such erotic contents in the Indian religious forms are explained in different ways. While the most popular view refers to transcendence to spirituality through sensuality, a clear distinction is also sometimes attempted to segregate *kama* from *shringara*. *Shringara*, the depiction of erotic sentiments in art-forms is often placed on high pedestal. Its inferior partner, *kama*, in its unsublimated form is just a manifestation of sex-desire, whose transformation into *shringara* is possible by different ways.[2]: by giving an elegant and concrete form to the

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1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, Pondicherry, 1959.
2. R.S. Jaitly, "Transformation *of Kama* into *Srngara*", *26th International Congress of Orientalists*, New Delhi, 1964.

abstract sex-desire through the media of tone, word, colour, line and stones whereby it becomes a source of actual delight to the mind; by giving purposefulness to *kama*; in an allegorical sense; and by way of imaginative power which creates new things and imparts excellence to existing things. *Kama* is dependent on sex-glands which have two fold functions : generative (or creative) and re-creative. While the former is concerned with body and flesh the latter is made use of by the artists who alone take *kama* to the height of *shringara*. This involvement of *shringara* is also manifest in the philosophy of Friedrich Schiller, who distinguishes two basic drives in man, the sensuous impulse (*Stofftrieb*) and the formal impulse (*formtrieb*) and argues that they are synthesized and lifted to a higher plane in what he calls the play impulse (*Spieltrieb*) which responds to the living shape (*Lebensform*) or beauty of the world. Play, in his sense is a more concrete version of Kant's harmony of imagination and understanding; it involves that special combination of freedom and necessity that comes in voluntary submission to rules for the sake of the game. By appealing to the play impulse and freeing man's higher self from dominance by his sensuous nature, religious art could render him more human besides giving him a social character.

The extent of fusion between the two fundamental concepts of any religious art *viz.*, aesthetics and symbols poses an interesting problem. In a given religious art-piece it is, at times, quite difficult to categorically state whether aesthetic elements predominate the religious constituents or *vice versa*. The conclusion again depends on the viewer's mental make-up and his sympathy or theistic involvement with the religious system behind such art forms. A religious art form, could therefore, mean differently to the followers of such religion as compared to the non-followers. While an image of phallus could greatly embarass an unaccustomed Westerner, a local faithful visualizes it as just a figure which represents a god. The same sensuousness of sculptures that could make a tremendous artistic appeal to a foreigner is almost skipped through by the devotee who is accustomed to it, as an accepted norm and he has little or no reaction towards their sensuousness. This could be because a religionist visualizes such art forms from a spiritual background and his view point is totally blurred to the non-religious aspects involved therein. This blurring could also be due to his ethnic background whose view-points he inherits. To illustrate this case, we may again go back to the religious art forms which have an erotic content.

The songs sung to propitiate the goddess during Kodungallur Bharani, one of the most popular festivals of Kerala, celebrated March-April every year, are totally erotic in content for outsiders. They describe unabashedly the sex-acts of the gods, goddesses and mortals. However, the fact that they are sung in utter devotion indicates how faith could overpower aesthetic or sensual pleasures in such a situation. Such an instance where 'religious side' of the religious art form overpowering the 'pleasure side' of an aesthetic experience despite the fact that the latter is found represented in a forceful fashion, is not quite exclusive to the Indian religious culture. As André Malraux would point out, "a romanesque crucifix was not regarded by its contemporaries as a work of sculpture, nor Cimabue's Madonna as a picture. Even Phidias 'Pallas Athene' was not primarily a statue". So the word 'religious art' implies something about the use and end of the work as much as about the intention of its creator. And it has thus changed its meaning through the ages, thanks to the irretrievable fusion of aesthetics with faith to such a great extent that it is not easy to segregate one from the other, without distorting its significance.

In the same way as aesthetic content of art could be overshadowed by powerful religious sentiments which could destroy their sensuous appeal and transform them into symbols with new meanings and explanations, the symbolic aspects based on religious sentiments could themselves in course of time turn out to be the determinants of the aesthetic ideals of an ethnic group. Thus it is often difficult for an Indian *connoisseur* to decide whether forms such a lotus (*padma*),[1] wheel (*chakra*), *swastika*, *srivasta* etc. represent the true aesthetic side or they are just incorporated merely in a symbolic sense. Over years however, such symbols have become part and parcel of a religious art—both in Hinduism and in Buddhism—and have developed certain aesthetic sense in the course of their long existence.

In so far as the development of temple structures is concerned, we find a discernible shift in the ratio between contribution made by symbols on one hand and that of aesthetics on the other. The most primitive of temple structures of the Gupta period as we find near Sanchi represent a simple *garbhagriha* with a small doorway. This, in its simplest form represents a cubical cella with little or no ornamentation. It has a very high symbolic sense. It's dark cubical form symbolizes a womb in which a devotee's soul is to take a re-birth symbolically. In the course of evolution of temple structures, several additional parts like pillared-porches, vestibules *etc.* were added up. These secondary structures do not reflect this sort of intense symbolism to which cella is associated with. The structures like *mandapa* are more functional in nature rather than symbolic. They are however, aesthetically conceived—depending on the needs which are determined by the regional preferences and tastes. Unlike cella, they exhibit a high degree of ornamentations, giving almost free scope to the expression and imagination of artists and architects. It is here we find the dominance of artist's expression well within the accepted norms of the religionists.

The course of structural development in temple also depicts a clear tilt towards an aesthetic or sensuous approach. This shift from the adherence to high symbolism and simplicity of forms of the early Gupta temples, indicates certain dilution in the religious ideals. At the same time, this shift has also caused tremendous development in the aesthetic notions. The most magnificient and stupendous structures built in and around the temples at Khajuraho, Bhubneshwar, Thanjavur, Belur, Ellora and Madurai by able sculptors and craftsmen not only depict a refined artistic form, but also express a sense of over-powering dominance by creating an inspiration or awe in the mind of their viewers by their sheer size and grandeur. This subtle aggression was necessary to capture the hearts of the masses and to inject into them certain fidelity so that no other competing sect or faith could be in a position to influence them.

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[1] It is often difficult in a religious art to categorize whether the forms of flowers *etc.* convey an aesthetic sense or a symbolic meaning. The fusion between aesthetics and symbols here is perfect and inseparable. The western counterpart for the Indian lotus could be lily, which is adored as the symbol of Christ's resurrection, and also of life's purity and thought. Artists for centuries have pictured the Angel Gabriel coming to the Virgin Mary with a spray of lilies in hand to announce that she is to be the mother of the Christ child.

These temple structures have remained not just the embodiments of faith; they were also conceived with a view to perpetuate the man's adherence to faith so that the succeeding generations do not go astray from the ideals originally conceived, adored and believed in by their forefathers.

Glossary

Agni, fire; fire-god

Amalaka, crowning, lotiform member of *shikhara*

Antarala, vestibule; chamber in front of shrine or cella

Apsaras, celestial nymphs

Asana, a seat or throne

Asura, an evil spirit, a demon; the chief of the evil spirits

Azhwars, a group of twelve South Indian saints devoted to Lord Vishnu

Bhadra, in Orissan architecture, a structure with a roof in the form of a terraced pyramid; flat face or facet of the *shikhara*

Bhagavata Mela, a dance-drama of Tamil Nadu

Bhajan, service, adoration, worship

Bhakti, devotion to a deity; source of theistic development and imagery

Bharata Natyam, classical dance of India as expounded by sage Bharata

Bhavanam, temple

Bhoga, artistic pleasure or enjoyment

Bhoga Mandapa, refectory of an Orissan temple

Bhumi, literally the ground on which all things are founded; in architecture, the successive planes or divisions of a Dravidian temple or the horizontal courses of a *shikhara*

Brahma, one of the Hindu trinity; the Creator

Brahman, the Supreme Being, regarded as impersonal and divested of all qualities and action; (according to Vedantins, Brahman is both the efficient and the material cause of the visible universe, the all-pervading soul and spirit of the universe, the essence from which all created things are produced and into which they are absorbed).

Brahmanas, commentaries on Vedas

Chaitya, originally a tumulus (*chita*), but subsequently a sanctuary of any kind; sanctuary in the form of an apsidal hall

Choultries, pillared halls attached to outside of Dravidian temples

Dasavatara, ten incarnations of Vishnu

Deul, in Bengal and Orissa, generic name for a temple as a whole but it is also used to signify the sanctuary only such as cella and its tower, the *vimana*

Deva, god

Devagara, temple

Devagriham, temple

Devakulam, temple

Devalaya, temple

Devata, celestial being; god

Devayatanam, temple

Devi, goodess

Dharmachakra, Wheel of Law

Dhyana, meditation

Dikpala, see *Lokpala*

Ganga, the river-goddess of the Ganges

Garbhagriha, sanctum of the shrine

Gavaksha, small, ornamental niches on lowest towers

Ghat, steps in a river bank used for bathing; mountain

Gopuram, monumental gateway

Harmyam, temple

Hinayana, "little vehicle", earlier form of Buddhism in which the only object of worship was the *stupa*

Indra, Lord of the celestials; the god of rain

Isana, a master or lord

Jagamohan, audience-hall or anteroom; compartment of an Orissan temple fronting the sanctuary

Jainism, a religious sect; off-shoot of Hinduism founded by Mahavira in sixth century B.C.

Jamuna, the river-goddess

Jatakas, legends on the previous lives of the Buddha

Kailasha, the mountain-abode of Lord Shiva

Kala, Time

Kalasha, ornamental pots found in finials and capitals

Kama, pleasure or desire

Karana, dance-pose

Kathakali, colourful and vigorous dance-drama of Kerala

Koothambalam, theatre-hall of Kerala

Kriti, song

Kshetra, sacred place

Kubera, the god of riches and treasure and the regent of the northern quarters

Kuchupudi, folk-dance of Andhra Pradesh

Kuta, pitcher

Lingam, phallic symbol of Shiva

Lokpala, guardian of the cardinal points

Mahabharata, an epic

Mahayana, "the great vehicle", later development of *Hinayana*, with emphasis on the Buddha worship

Mandala, magical diagram or circle; imagined shape of the cosmos; circular diagram representing a Buddhist hierarchy of cosmology

Mandapa, large open hall; porch

Mandiram, temple

Mantra, prayer formula; sacred verse; phrases believed to have magical or religious power

Meru, the world mountain of Indian cosmology

Mishra, mixed

Mithuna, couple in erotic pose or loving embrace

Moksha, salvation; release from transmigration

Naga, snake-spirit

Nagara, capital or city

Nandi, sacred bull of Shiva

Natamandira, dancing hall, usually the middle structure in an Orissan temple

Nataraja, Shiva as Lord of the Dance

Natya, dance

Natya Mandapa, hall of dance

Natya Shastra, treatises on dance

Navagraha, nine planets

Nayanmars, a group of sixty three South Indian saints devoted to Lord Shiva

Nritta, rhythmic dance

Nritya Mandapa, hall of dance

Panini, name of a celebrated grammarian, who is considered as the inspired *muni* and is said to have derived his knowledge of grammar from Shiva

Pradakshina Patha, processional passage or ambulatory

Prajapati, the god presiding over creation

Prakara, open courtyard or passage around a temple

Prana, breath of life

Puja, ritual of devotional service

Puranas, sacred books of mythology and epic

Purusha, ideal man

Raga, *Ragini*, musical melody structure upon which a musician improvises (literally 'colour' or 'mood')

Ramayana, the adventures of Rama; a celebrated epic by Valmiki which contains about 24,000 verses

Rasa, flavour or essence; the emotional character of a particular work of art

Ratha, chariot; a Pallava temple, shaped like a celestial chariot

Sabha, assembly

Saivism, the cult of Shiva worship

Samadhi, profound or abstract meditation, perfect absorption of thought into the one object of meditation *i.e.*, the Supreme Spirit

Samhita, text of the *Vedas*; collection of hymns, prayers and sacrificial formulae

Sari, Indian woman's robe worn by wrapping a piece of cloth around the body

Sayana, bed

Shakti, power; the feminine aspect of divinity

Shalabhanjika, statuette; literally, a sculpture representing a girl gathering *sal* flowers

Shastra, text of rules

Shikhara, the super-structure over the cella

Shilpa Shastra, text book on sculpture

Shiva, member of the Hindu trinity; the Destroyer

Shringara, erotic

Srikoil, temple of Kerala

Stupa, a Buddhist relic mound

Stupika, *Stupi*, small, domical structure resembling a *stupa*, employed as a crowning member of Dravidian temples and repeated in smaller scale on the lower levels of the structure

Sudha, brick

Tandava, fierce, violent dance of Shiva

Tribhanga, pose of the three bends in dance and in art

Upanishad, ancient religious texts

Vaishnavism, the cult of worshipping Lord Vishnu

Vajra, thunder-bolt

Vajrasana, adamantine throne

Varuna, god of oceans

Vastu Shatra, 'rules of architecture'

Vayu, god of winds

Veda, the four books of early Aryan scripture containing hymns and formulae for Brahmanic priestly ritual; they are the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda

Vedanga, six accessory branches of knowledge; literally, 'limbs' of the *Vedas*

Veedinatakamu, folk-theatre of Andhra Pradesh

Vesara, type of temple characteristic of Central India in the form of a Buddhist *chaitya*-hall

Vesman, temple

Vihara, Buddhist or Jain monastery

Vimana, towered sanctuary containing the cella in which the deity is enshrined

Vishnu, member of the Hindu trinity; the Preserver

Yaga, sacrifice

Yaksha, *Yakshi*, Dravidian nature-spirits associated with fertility; semi-divine beings

Yakshagana Bayalata, folk-dance of Andhra Pradesh

Yama, god of death

Yantra, mystic, amuletic diagram

Yoga, communication with universal spirit by practice of ecstatic meditation; one of the six schools of Hindu philosophy

Yoni, female sex-organ; symbol of *Shakti*

Zamindar, land-lord

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Description of Plates

1. MOHENJODARO—The Great Bath
2. TIRUVANNAMALAI—The Teppakkulam

   The temple pond, a most common feature of several Indian temples—particularly in South, could be traced back to the days of the Indus Valley Civilization.
3. VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT IN A TEMPLE STRUCTURE

   Diagrams A, B and C indicate how the planning of Hindu temples develops from a simple octagonal unit enclosed in a square, the whole consisting of a roof supported by a group of twelve columns : to this other rectangles are added to increase the size and complexity of the building.

   Diagrams D, E and F show how, by a series of square and triangular slabs, which set the scale of the building, these octagonal units are ceiled and roofed.

   Diagrams G and H indicate diagrammatically the development of the Indian spire, or *shikhara*, the most characteristic roof treatment over the square cella, or *garbhagriha*, of a Hindu temple. (*After Claude Batley*)
4. BHITARGAON—The Brick Temple

   Bricks have remained a popular medium for temple constructions. They are considered sacred for they symbolize the reconstituted body of *Prajapati* and *Agni*.

5. OSIAN–Jain Temple
Torana in front of the main temple.

6. ELLORA–Kailashnath Temple

7. KHAJURAHO–Bharatji Temple
Mithuna–portayals in the temple precincts represent the concept of transcendence to spirituality through sensuality.

8. SANCHI–Temple No. 17
This simplest temple structure consists of a simple cubical sanctum with an attached pillared porch and a flat and simple roof.

9. BHUBNESHWAR–Parasurameshwara Temple
It represents the earliest example of the Indo-Aryan architecture of Bhubneshwar. The ratio between the size of the cella and the spire here is 1 : 3, which is considered as the primitive feature in the evolutionary pathway, which culminated in the taller spire at Lingaraja Temple.

10. KHAJURAHO–Kandariya Mahadev Temple
The *shikhara* shows an unparallelled elegance and *legerté*. The addition of a series of flanking, vertical-graded peaks could be considered the climax of another distinguishable evolutionary trait.

11. ELLORA–Kailashnath Temple
The architecture here, completes the transition of the excavated monastery to form the simulated structural temple.

12. THANJAVUR–Nandi Mandapam
Not only gods but also their *vahanas* found an abode. The tall ceiling pillared-building open all around the four-sides are the features ideally suited for the local-climate.

13. CHIDAMBARAM–Nataraja Temple
Various *karanas* as depicted in a *gopuram.* A source for the study of traditional dance forms.

14. CHIDAMBARAM–Devi Temple
A Bharatanatyam pose.

15. MOHENJODARO—Mother Goddess
16. KHAJURAHO—A lady writing a letter
The sensual elements in the medieval art in India are inherited from a long tradition of fertility cults.

17. SANCHI—*Shalabhanjika* of the Eastern Gate.
Typical Indian notion of an ideal female body.

18. KANAUJ—The four-faced *linga*
Symbols of Shiva could be traced back to the very beginning of civilization in the Indian sub-continent.

19. BODHGAYA— A view of the Buddhist temple with a lotus tank in the foreground
20. MAHABALIPURAM—The Shore Temple
The strong affinity that exists between the spire of this temple and the South Indian *vimana* is an important point to note here.

21. MAHABALIPURAM—Rathas
The *vimanas* here consist of the storeyed super-structures with no utilitarian principle.

22. MOHAMMEDPUR (New Delhi)—The Hindu Temple
23. MOHAMMEDPUR (New Delhi)—The Tomb
The shape of the *shikhara* of the Hindu temple, which is of recent construction, depicts a close similarity with the adjacent moghul tomb.

24. DELHI—Jama Masjid
25. PATNA—The Birth Place of Guru Gobind Singh
Sikh architecture depicts a meeting-point of the Hindu and the Mughal Schools.

26. GOA—Nagesh Temple
27. GOA—Mahalakshmi Temple
Goan temples show characteristics which recall the Western architectural style. The climatic adaptation of this architectural style is also remarkable.

28. GAUHATI—Kamakhya Temple
29. JAI SAGAR—Ghanashyam Temple

An architectural *recipé* for a rain-torn region. The dome-like spires and the umbrella-shaped roofs of the porch prevent water-logging.

30. AJANTA—Caves No. 10 to 17

The monastic needs and guild woskmanship are combined to produce an unique form of cave architecture.

31. MAHABALIPURAM—Arjuna's Penance
32. CHIDAMBARAM—Devi Temple. Painting on the ceiling of the mandapa

The rich heritage in epic and mythology has provided inexhaustible source of themes for the religious artists in India.

33. ELLORA—a mythological scene
34. SANCHI—A Jataka story in West Gate

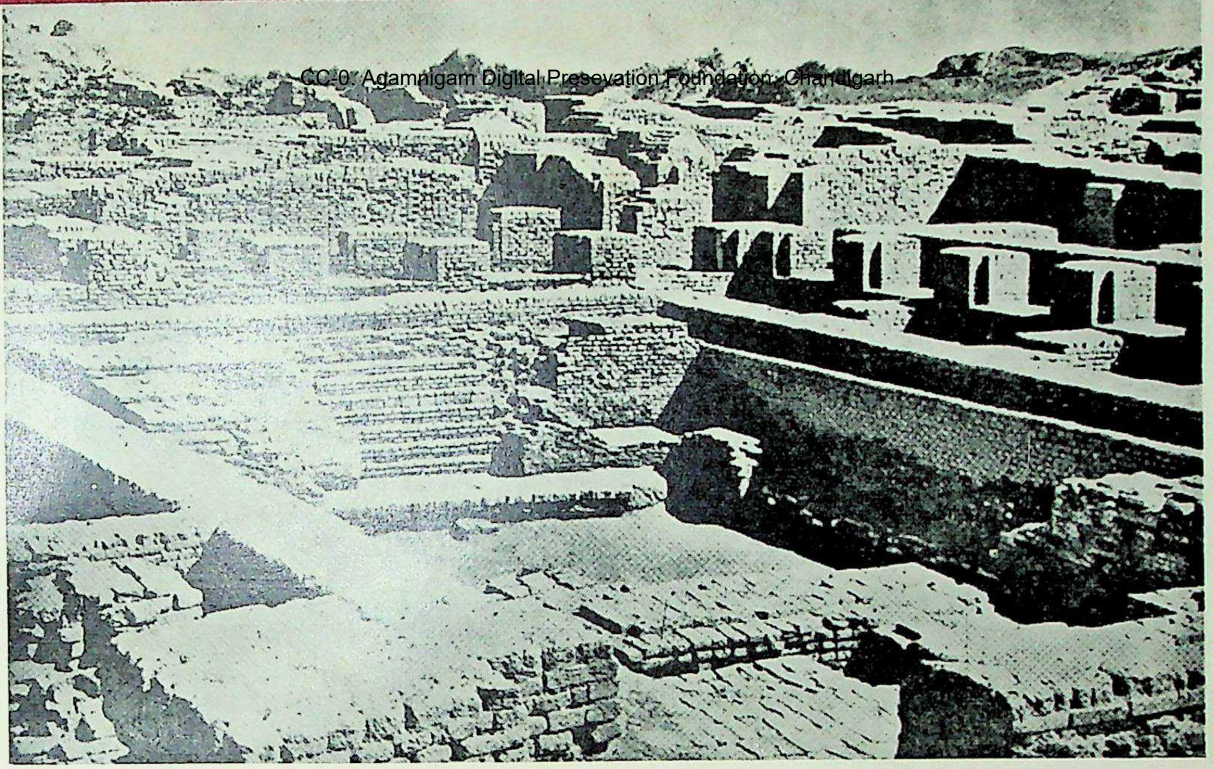
Myths and epics, which are the most easily assimilable forms of religious preachings even for the illiterate masses, were handed over from one generation to another through the media of fine arts.

35. MOHENJODARO—The Dancing Girl
36. BELUR—A Beauty at Chennakeshava Temple

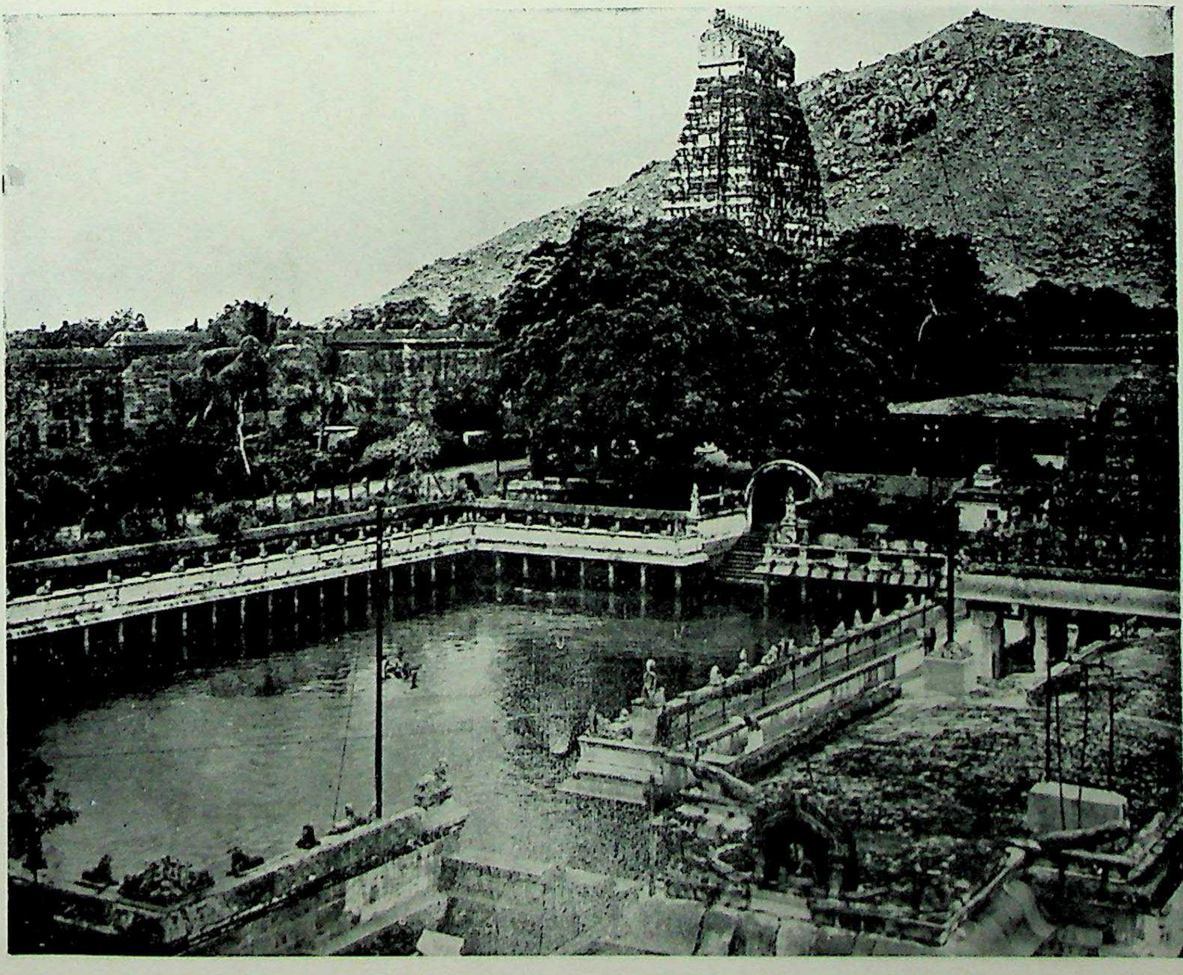
The 3000-year old Dancing Girl of Mohenjodaro is the forerunner to the later forms depicting the *tribhanga* style.

37. GAUHATI—Kamakhya Temple
38. UNKNOWN—Sculpture-torso of a female figure

The figurines of *yakshi* represent the involvement of pleasure which has been uninhibitedly exploited in the same way as in songs sung by Jayadeva.



1. MOHENJODARO – The Great Bath



2. TIRUVANNAMALAI – The Teppakkulam

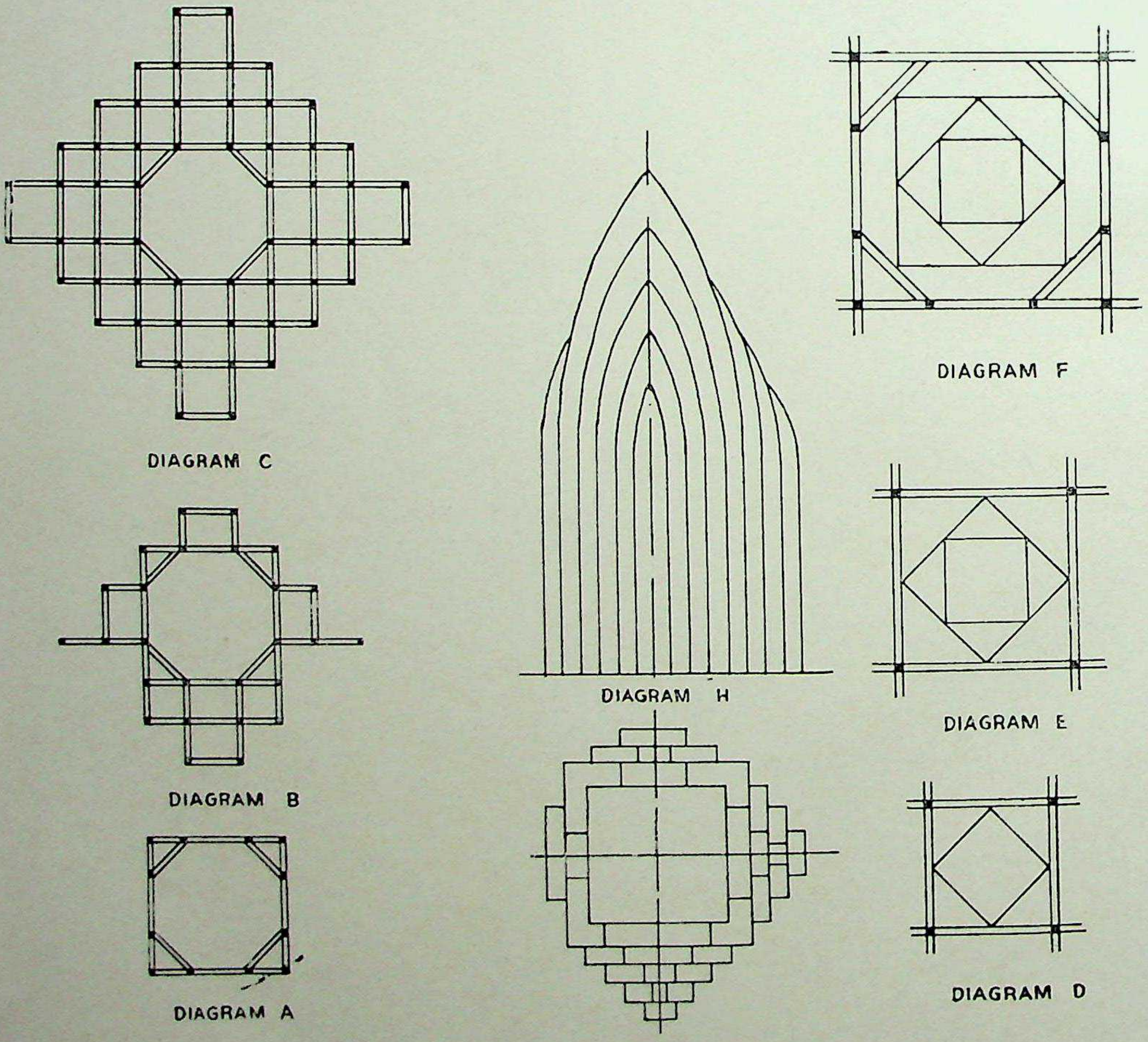


DIAGRAM C

DIAGRAM B

DIAGRAM A

DIAGRAM H

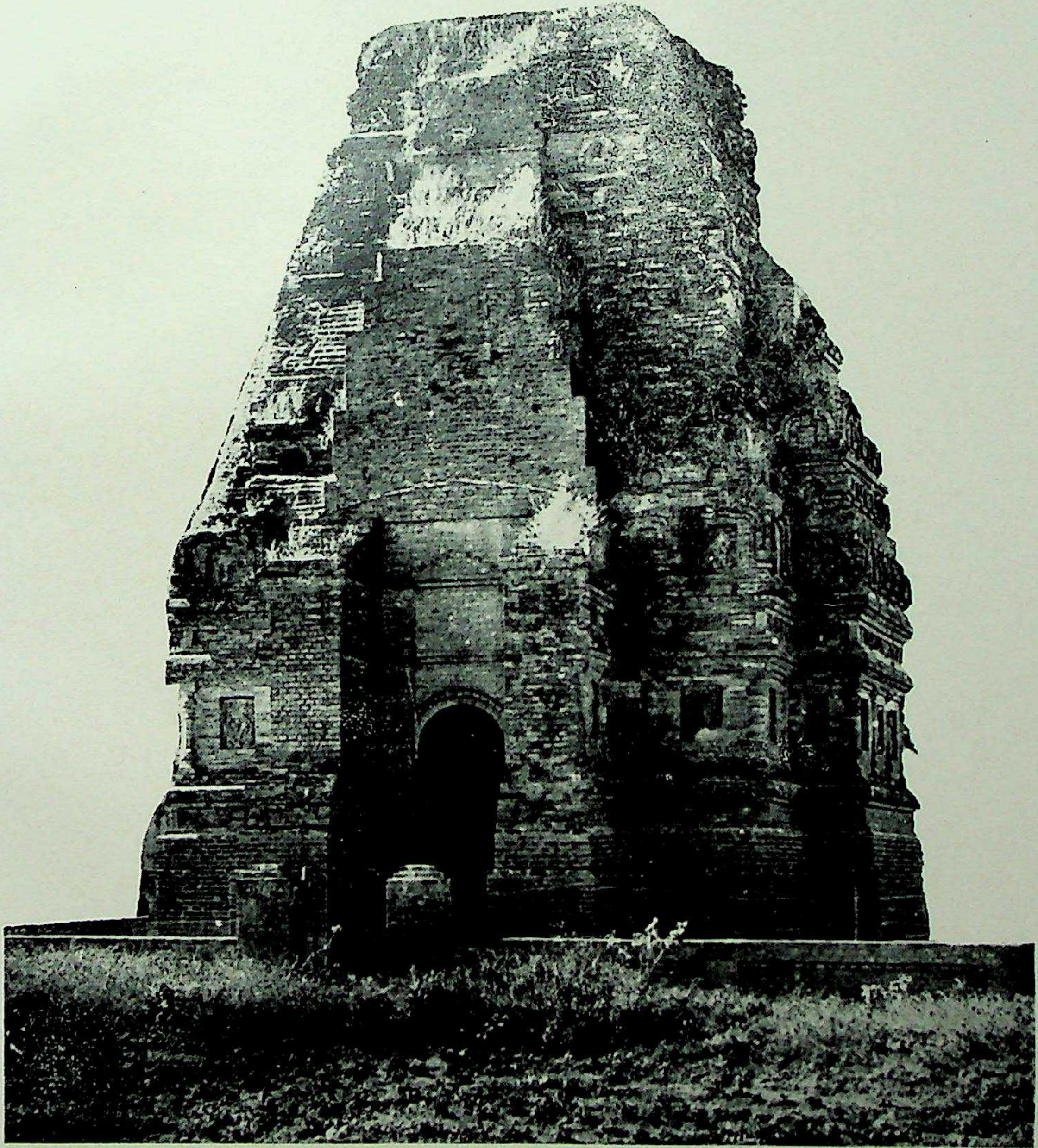
DIAGRAM G

DIAGRAM F

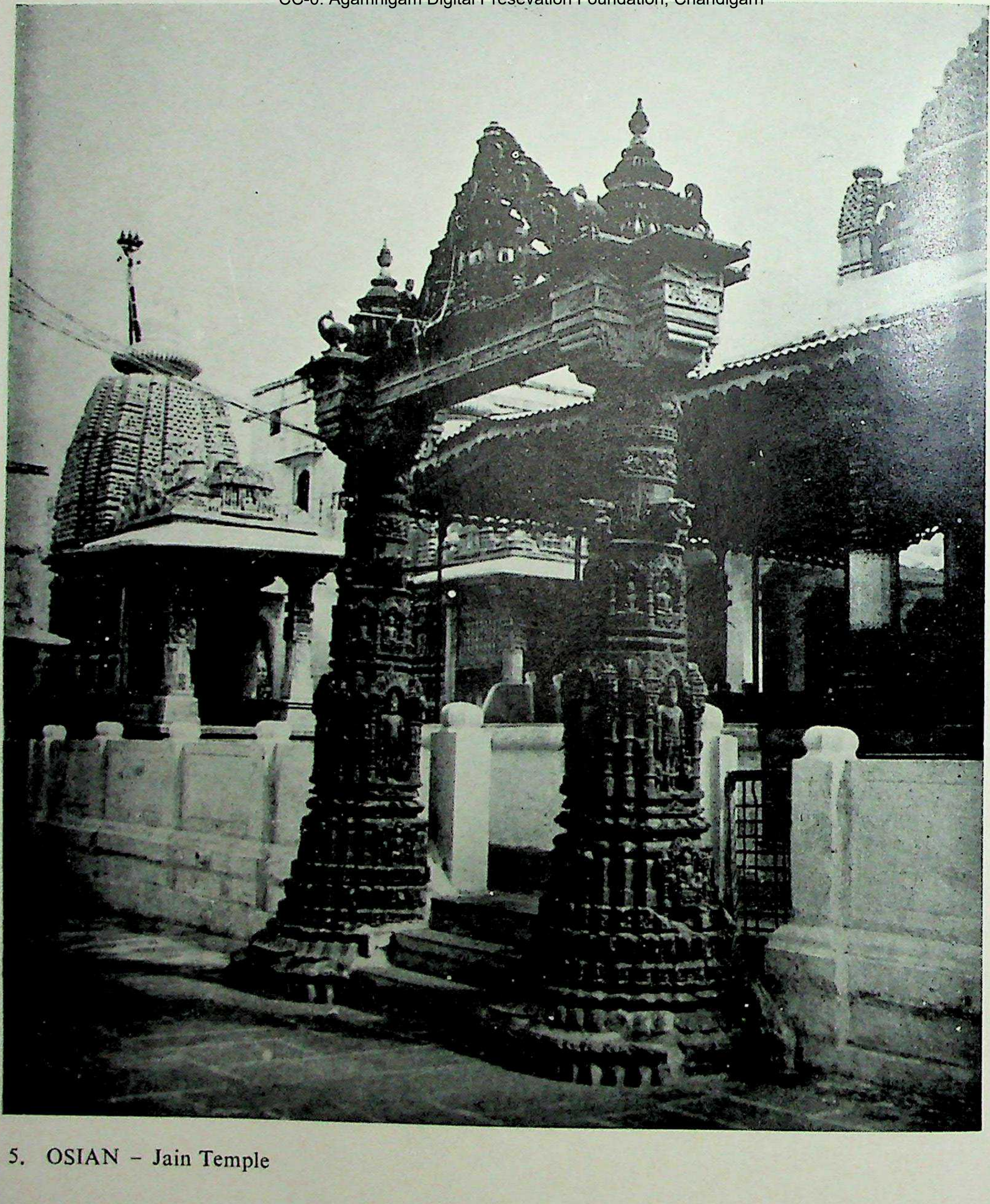
DIAGRAM E

DIAGRAM D

3. VERTICAL AND HORIZONTOL DEVELOPMENT IN A TEMPLE STRUCTURE

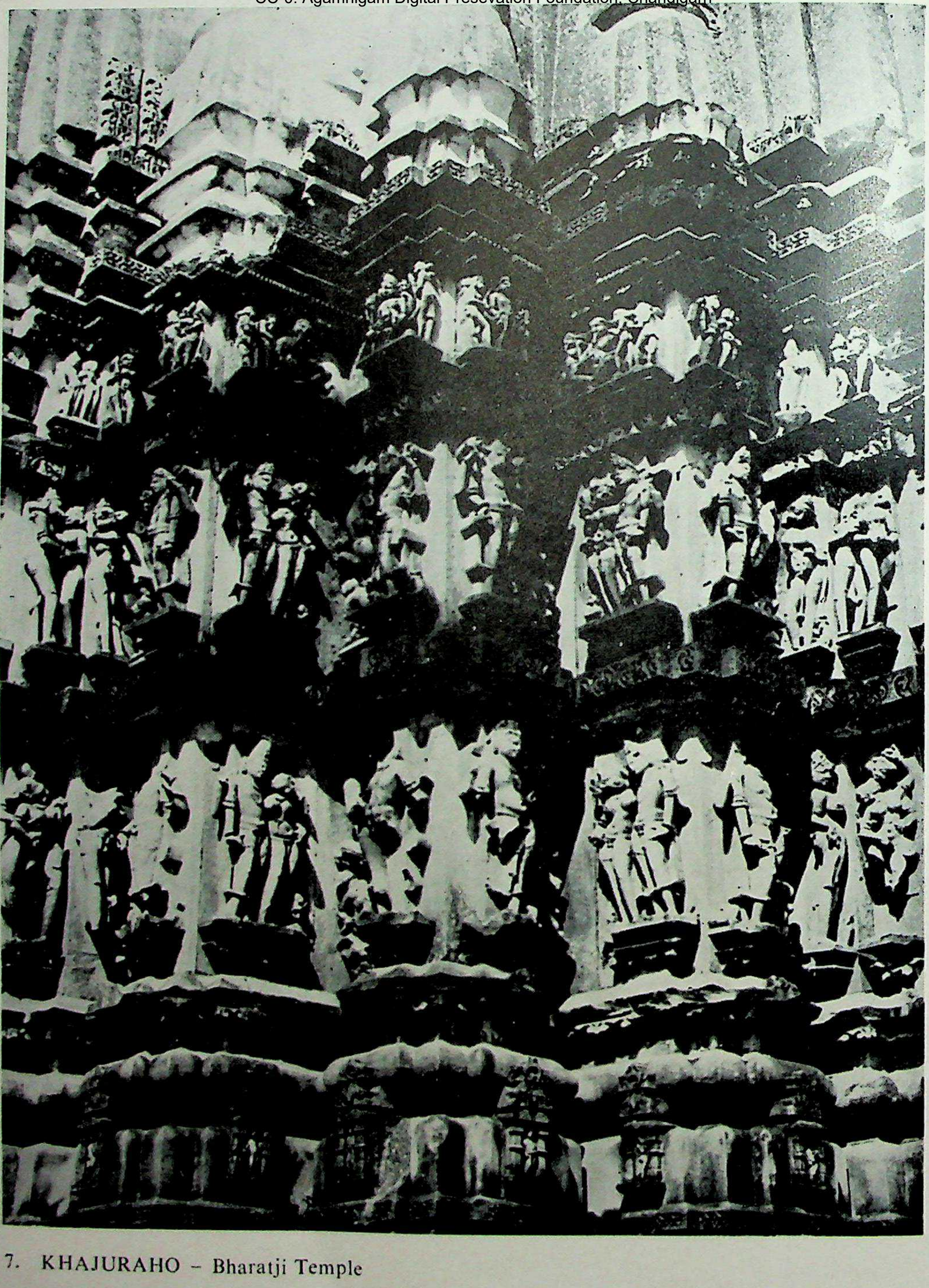


4. BHITARGAON – The Brick Temple

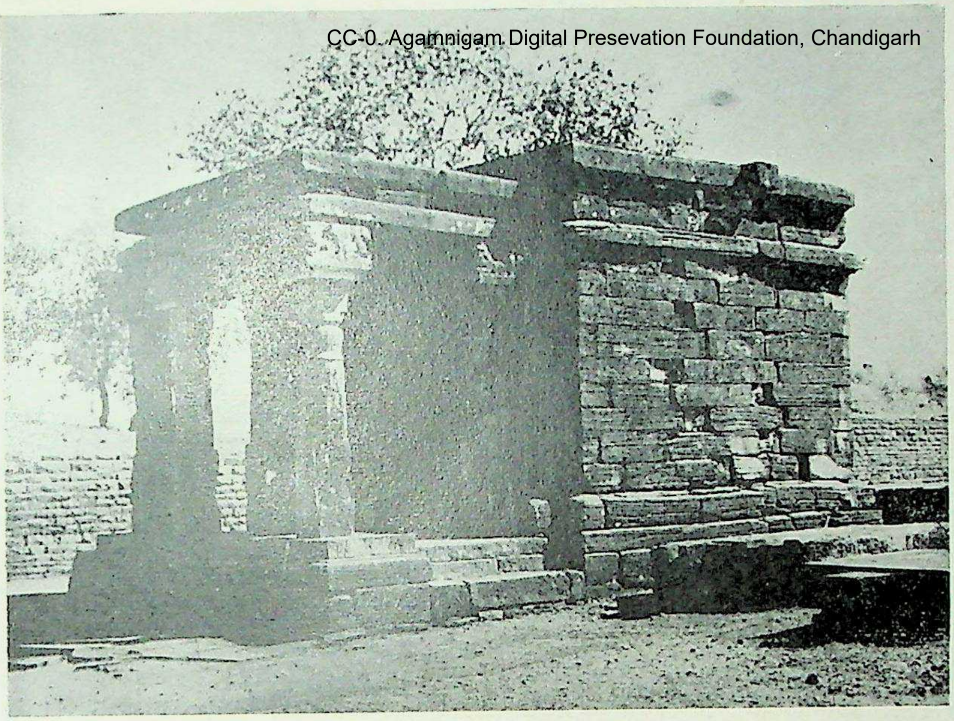


5. OSIAN – Jain Temple

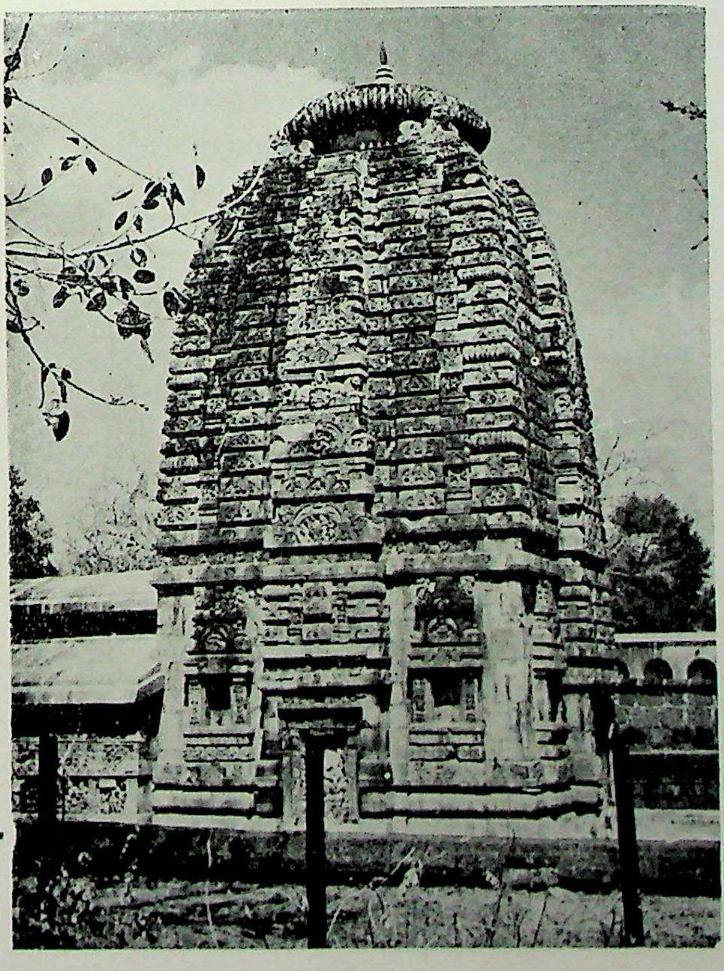
6. ELLORA - Kailashnath Temple



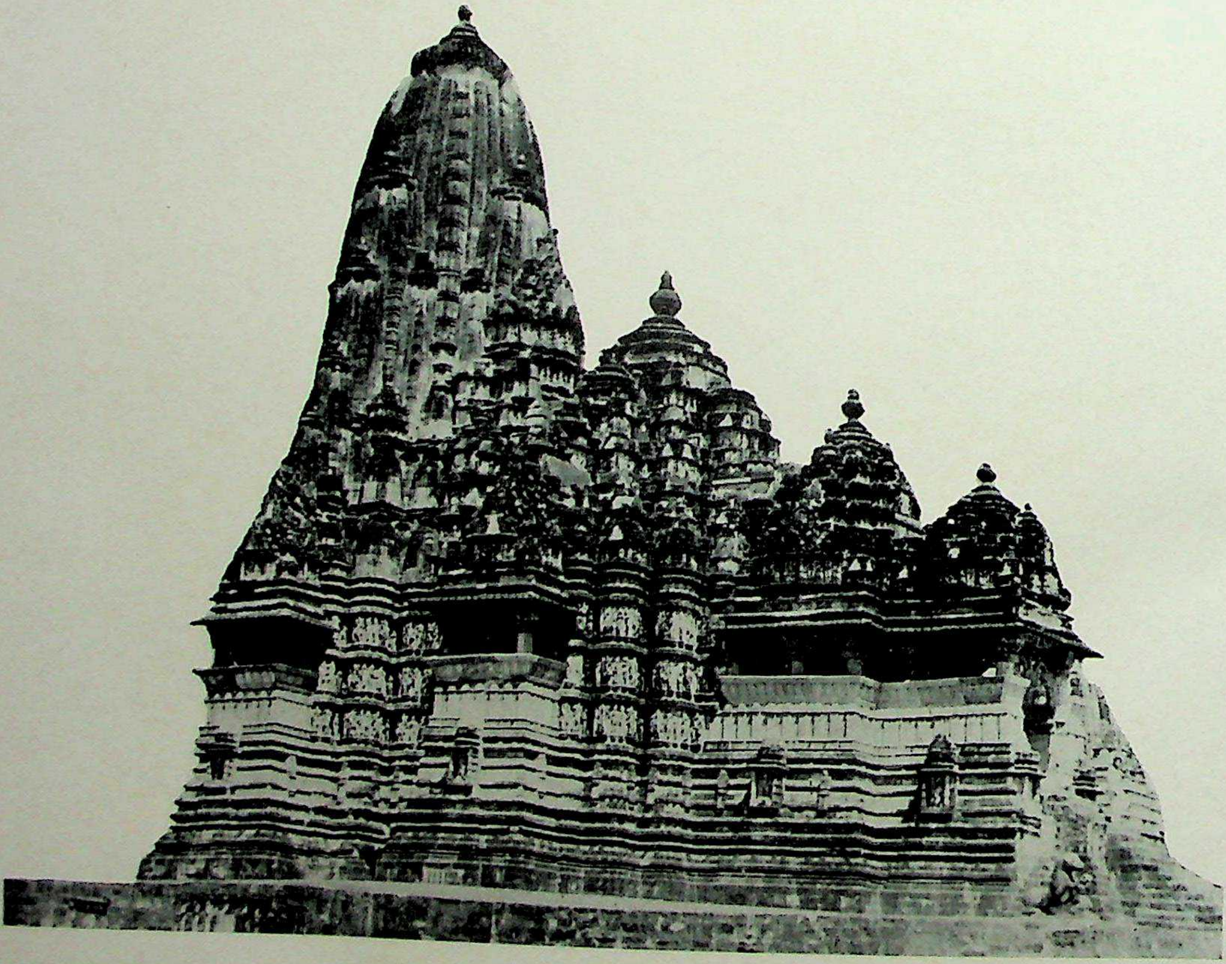
7. KHAJURAHO – Bharatji Temple



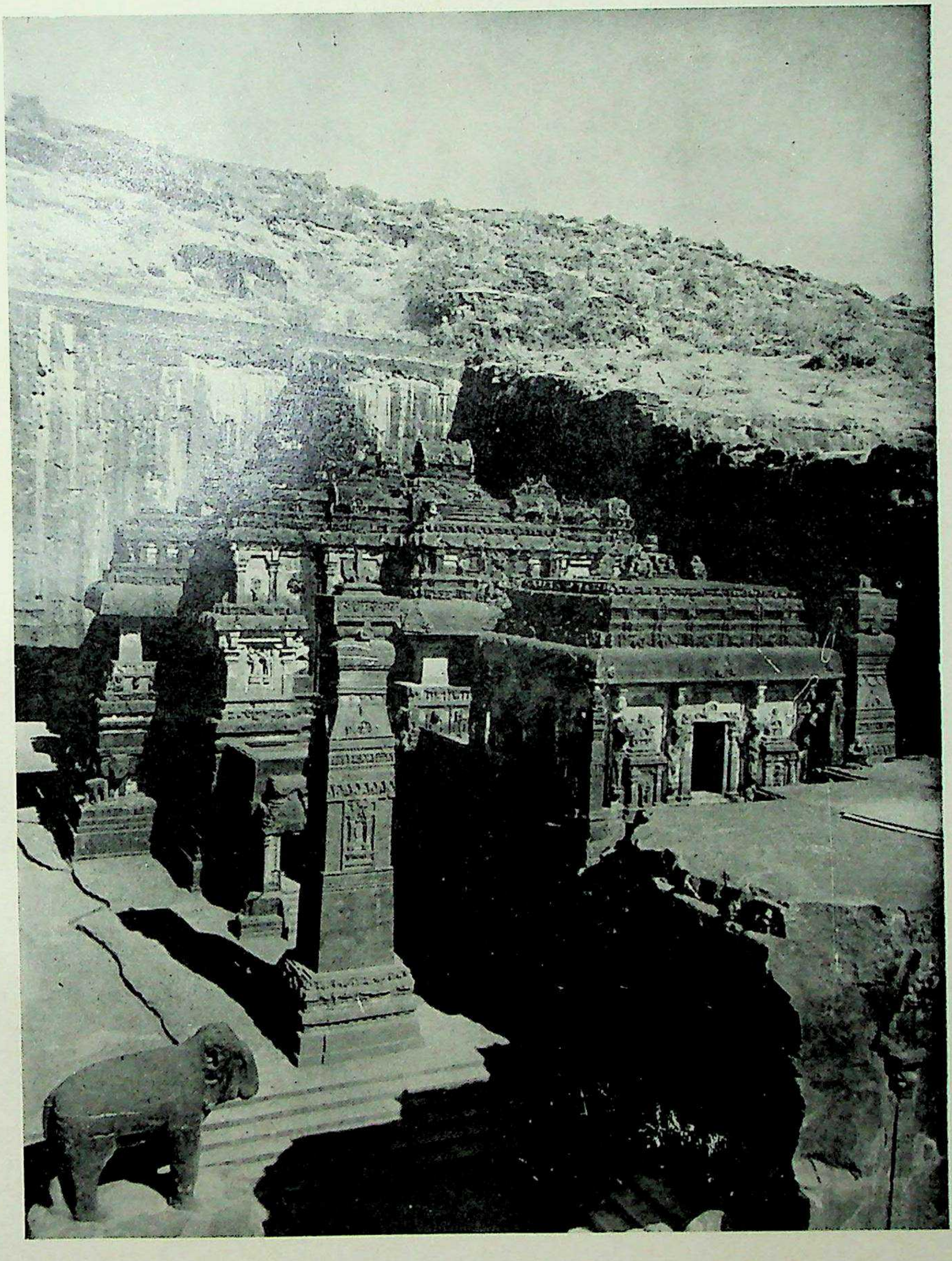
8. SANCHI – Temple No. 17



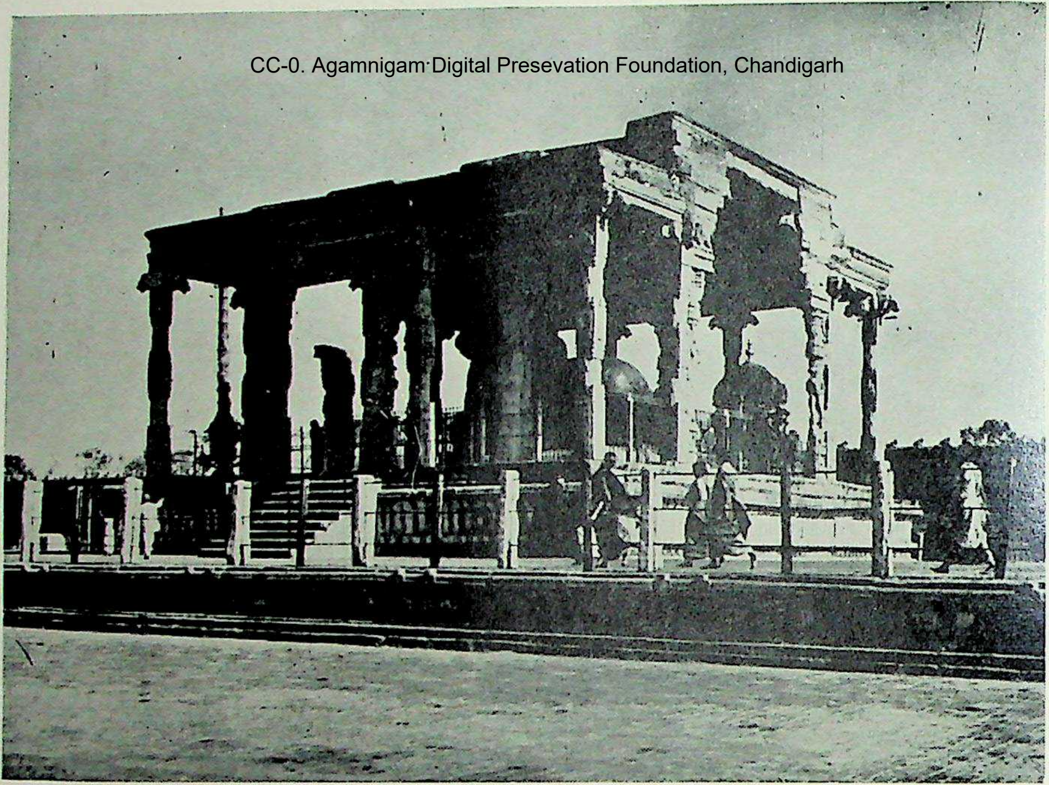
9. BHUBNESHWAR –
Parasurameshwara Temple



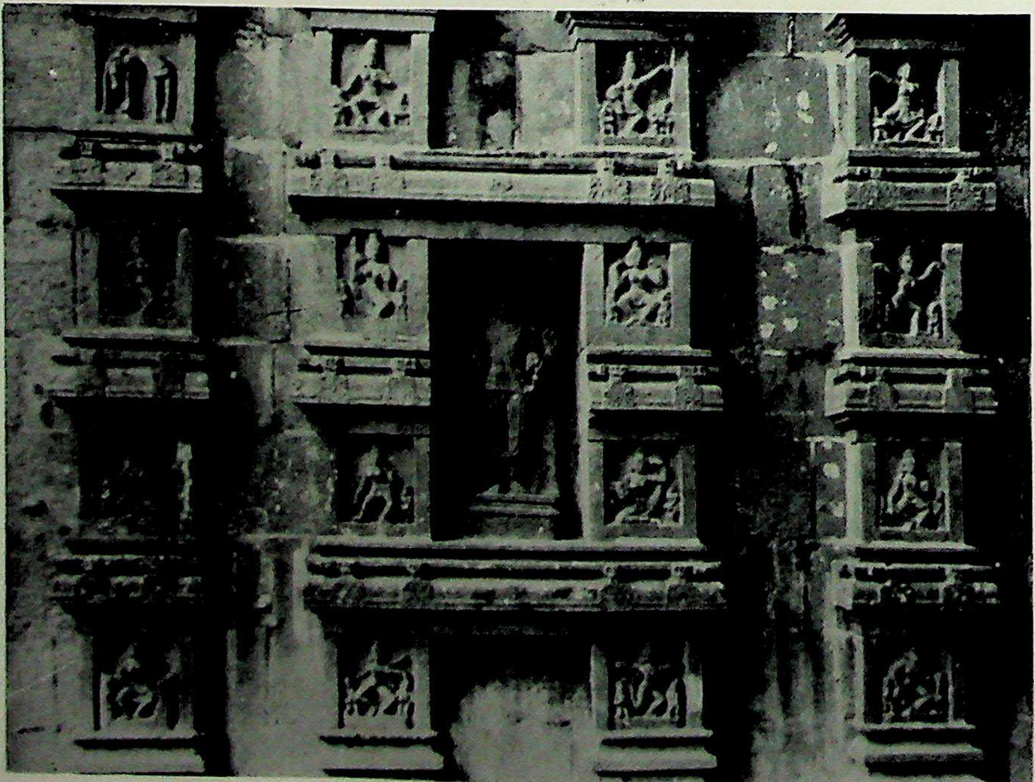
10. KHAJURAHO – Kandariya Mahadev Temple



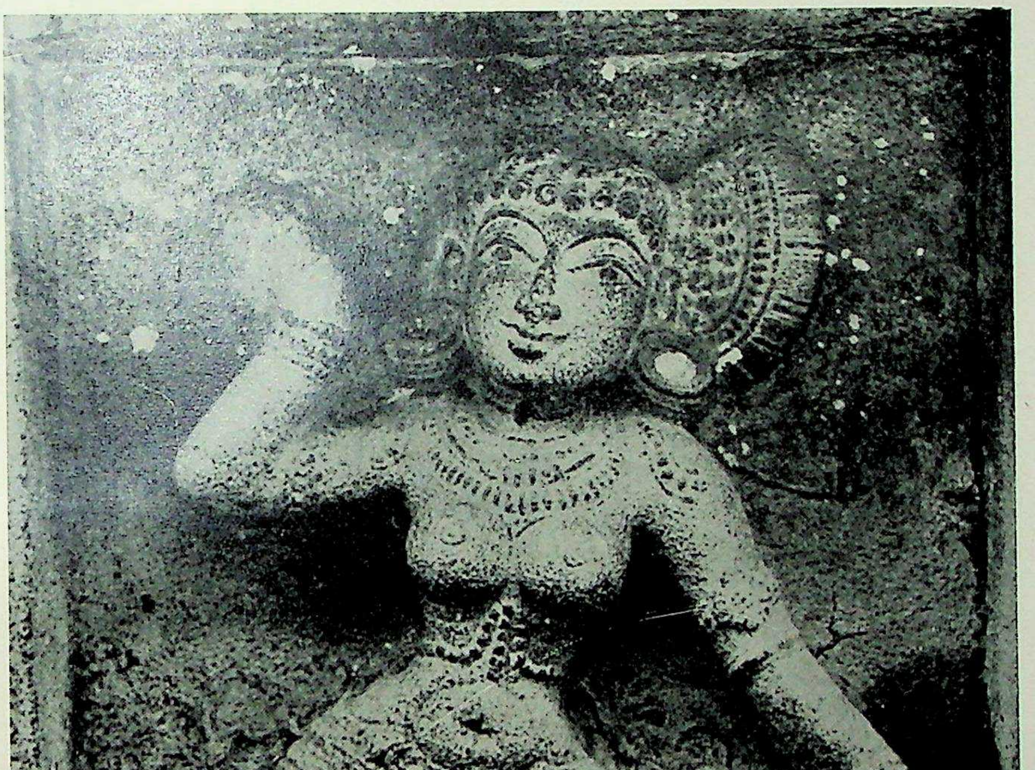
11. ELLORA – Kailashnath Temple



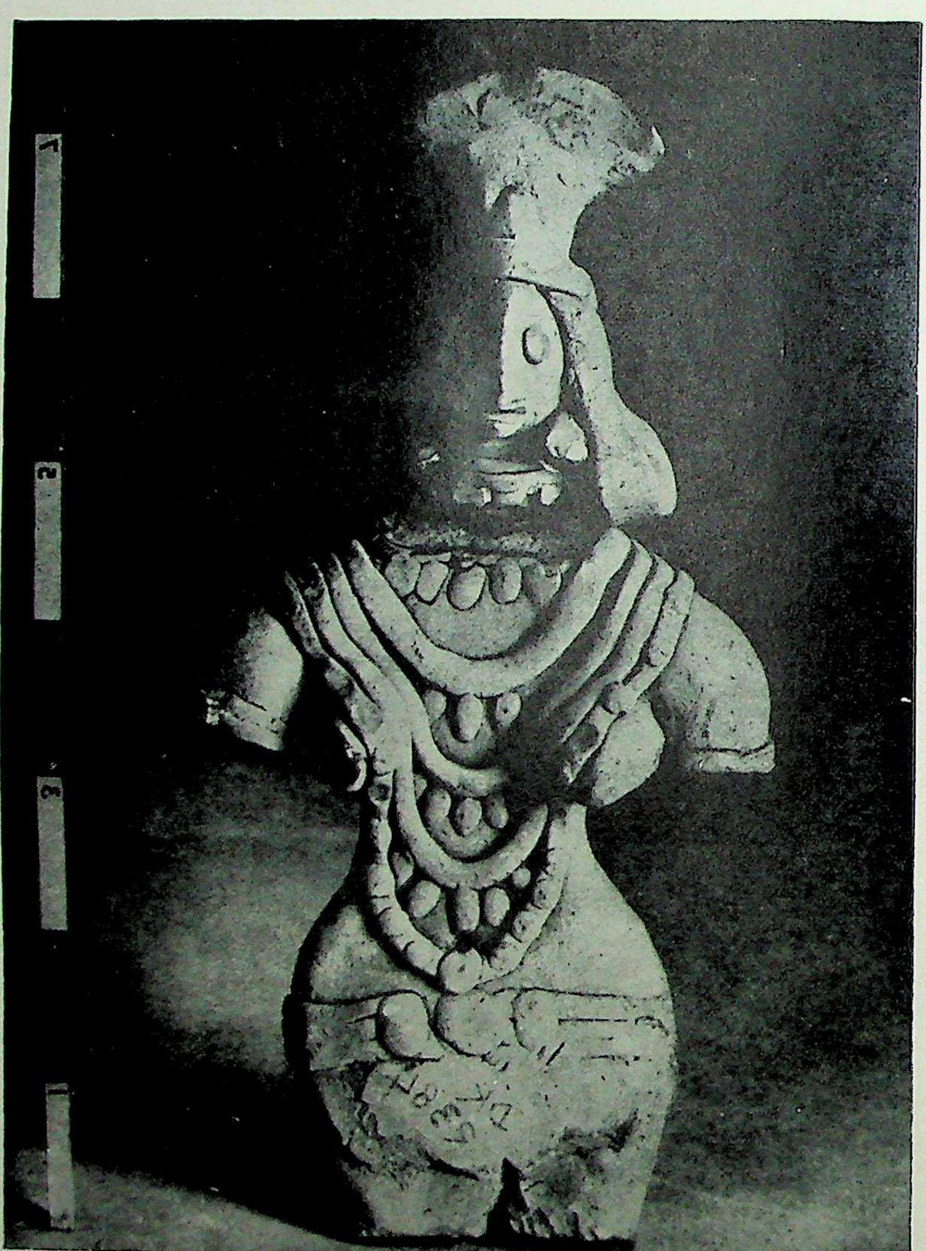
12. THANJAVUR – Nandi Mandapam



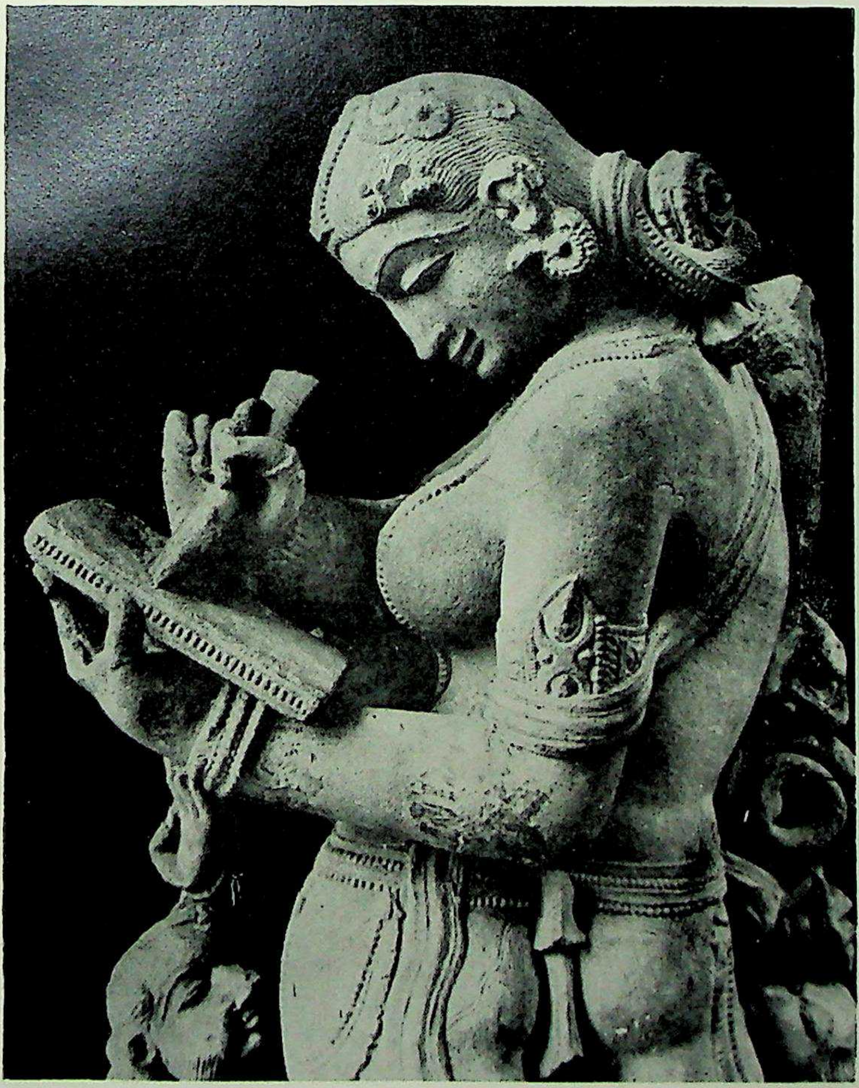
13. CHIDAMBARAM – Nataraja Temple



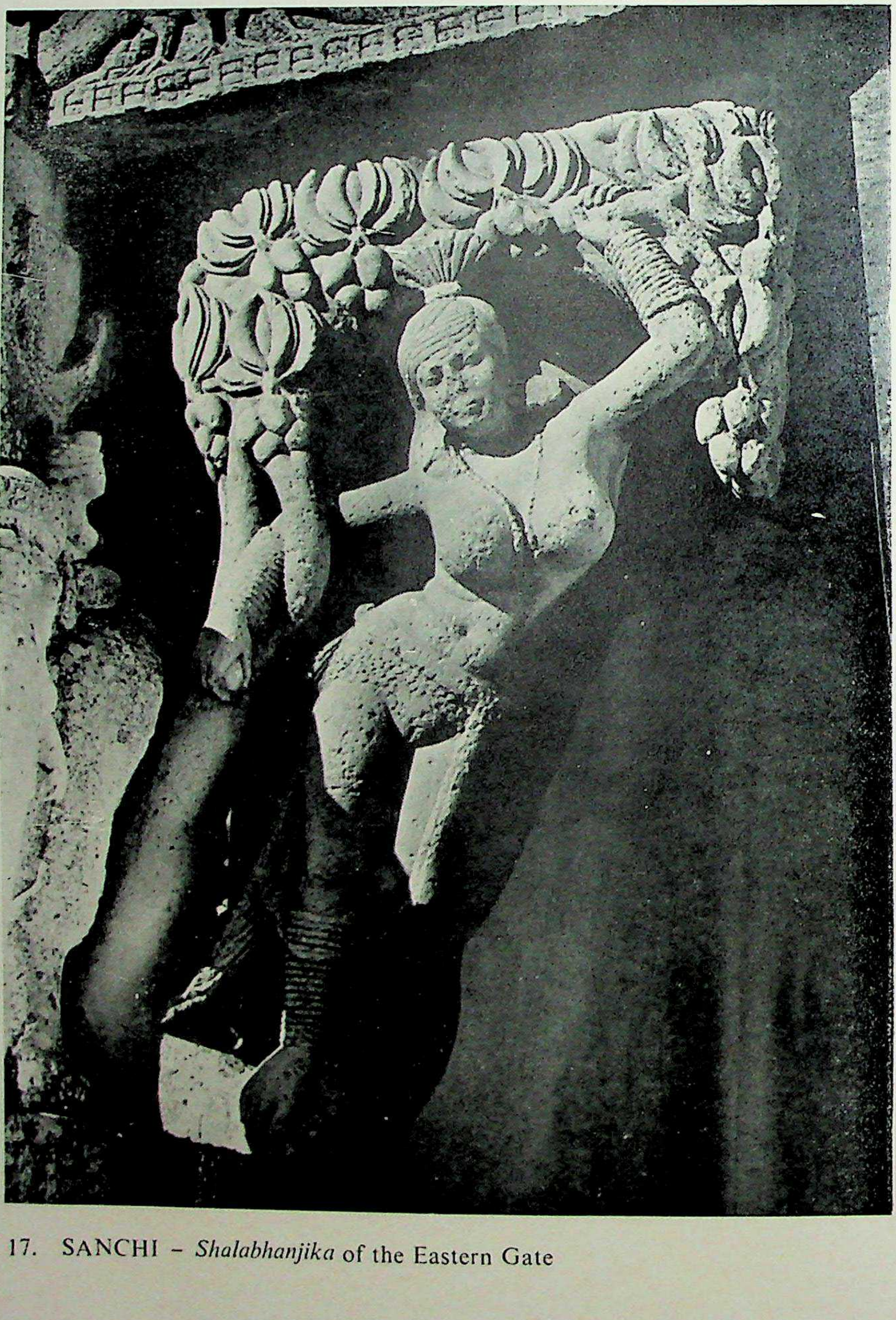
14. CHIDAMBARAM - Devi Temple



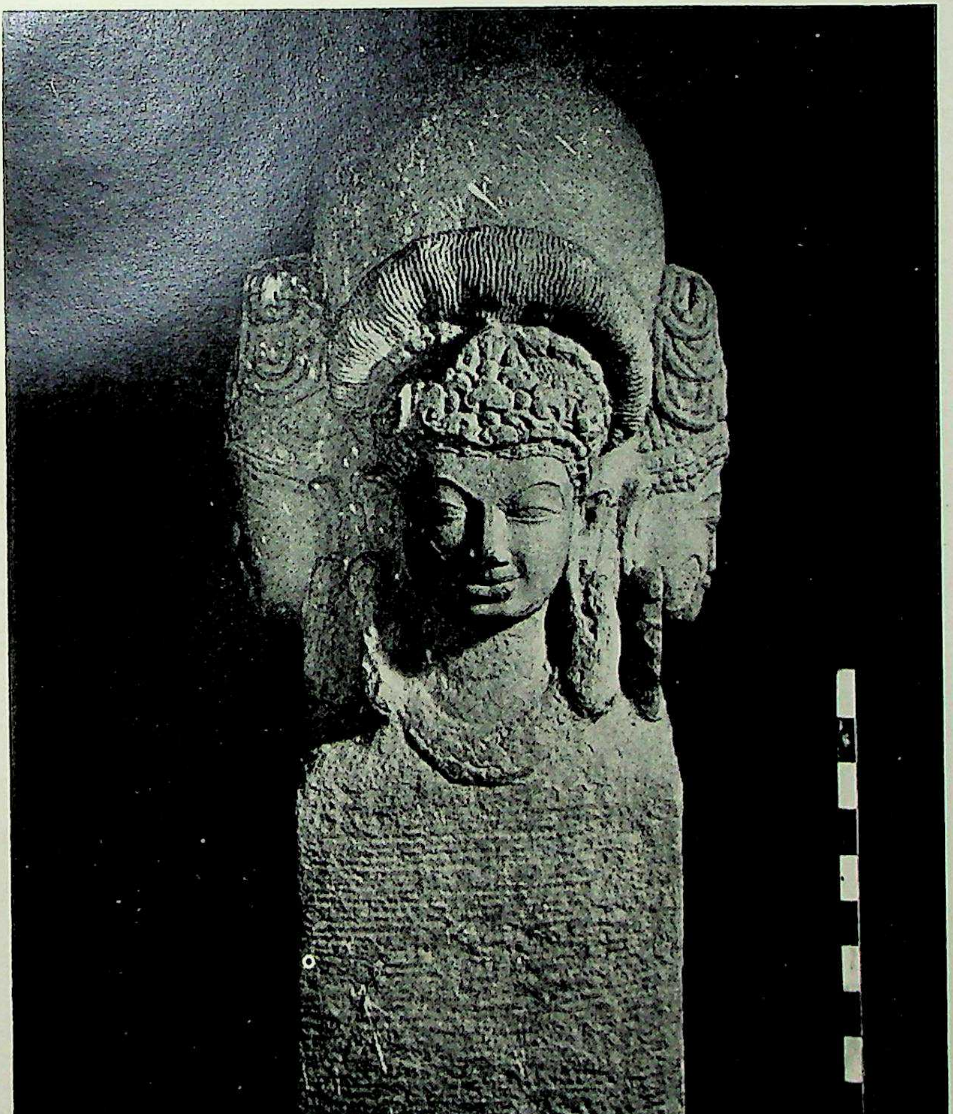
15. MOHENJODARO – Mother Goddess



16. KHAJURAHO – A Lady writing a letter

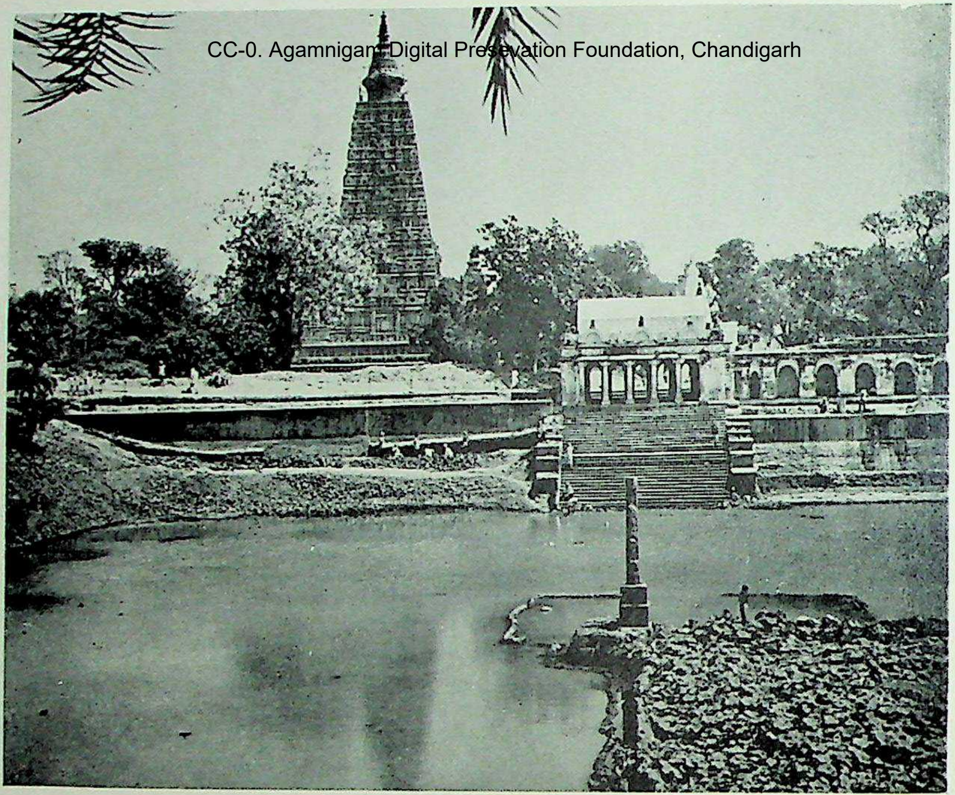


17. SANCHI – *Shalabhanjika* of the Eastern Gate

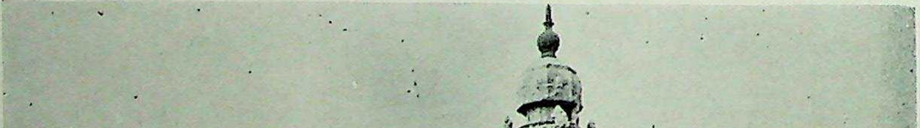


18. KANAUJ – The four-faced *linga*

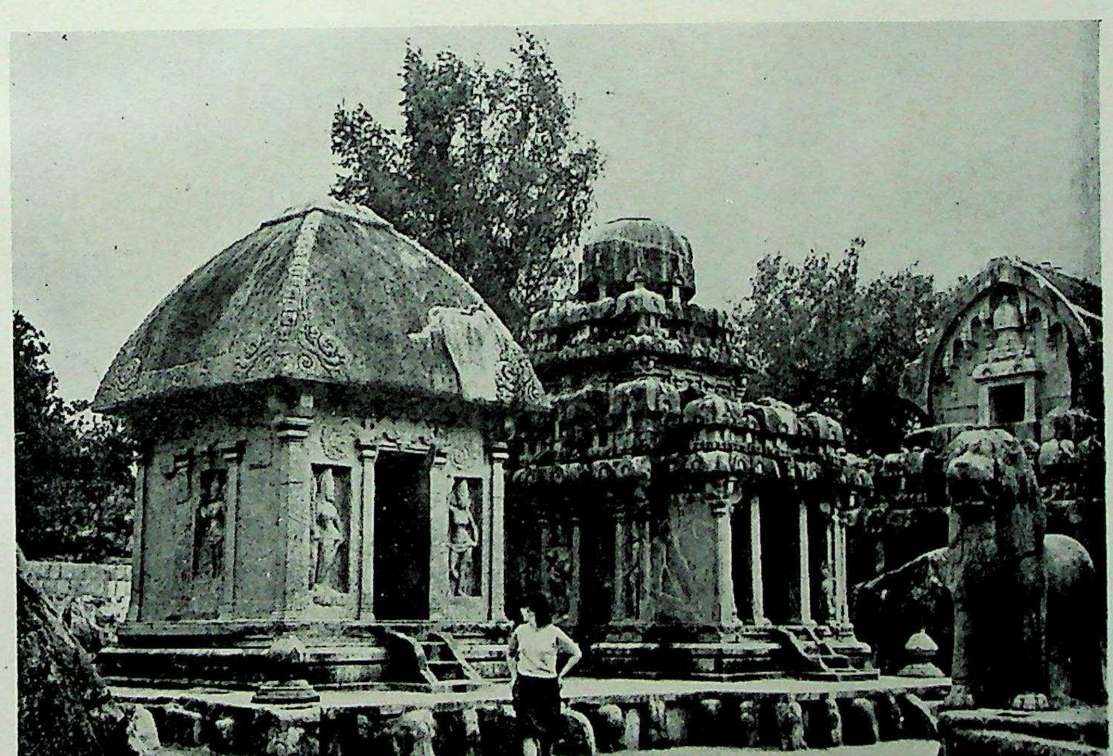
CC-0. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation, Chandigarh



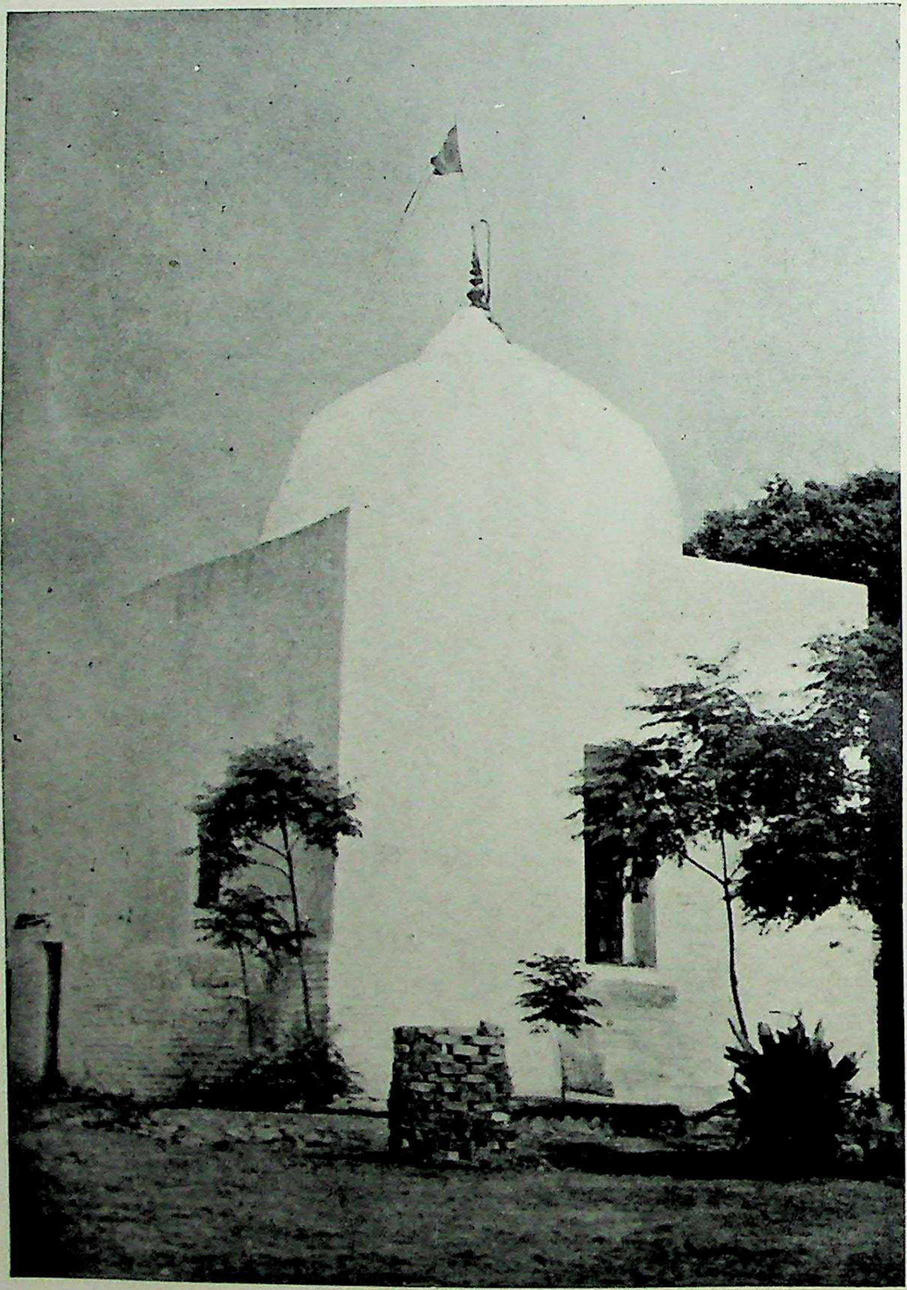
19. BODHGAYA – A view of the Buddhist temple with a lotus tank in the foreground



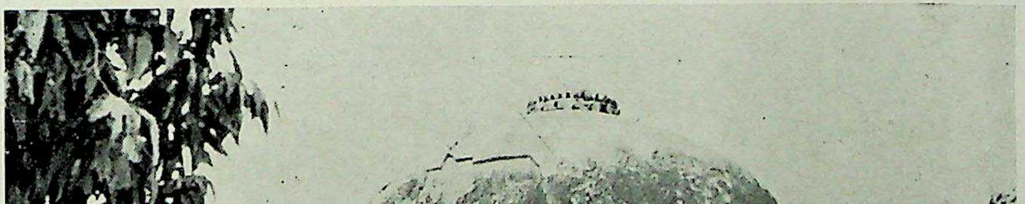
20. MAHABALIPURAM – The Shore Temple



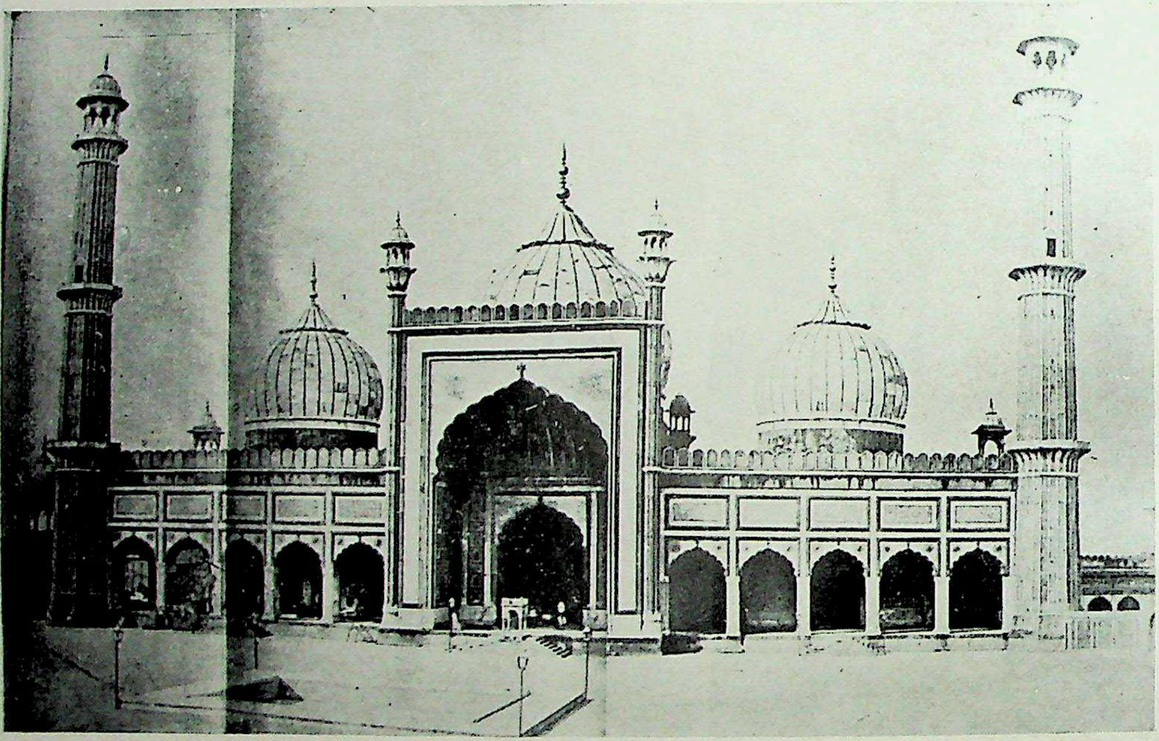
21. MAHABALIPURAM – Rathas



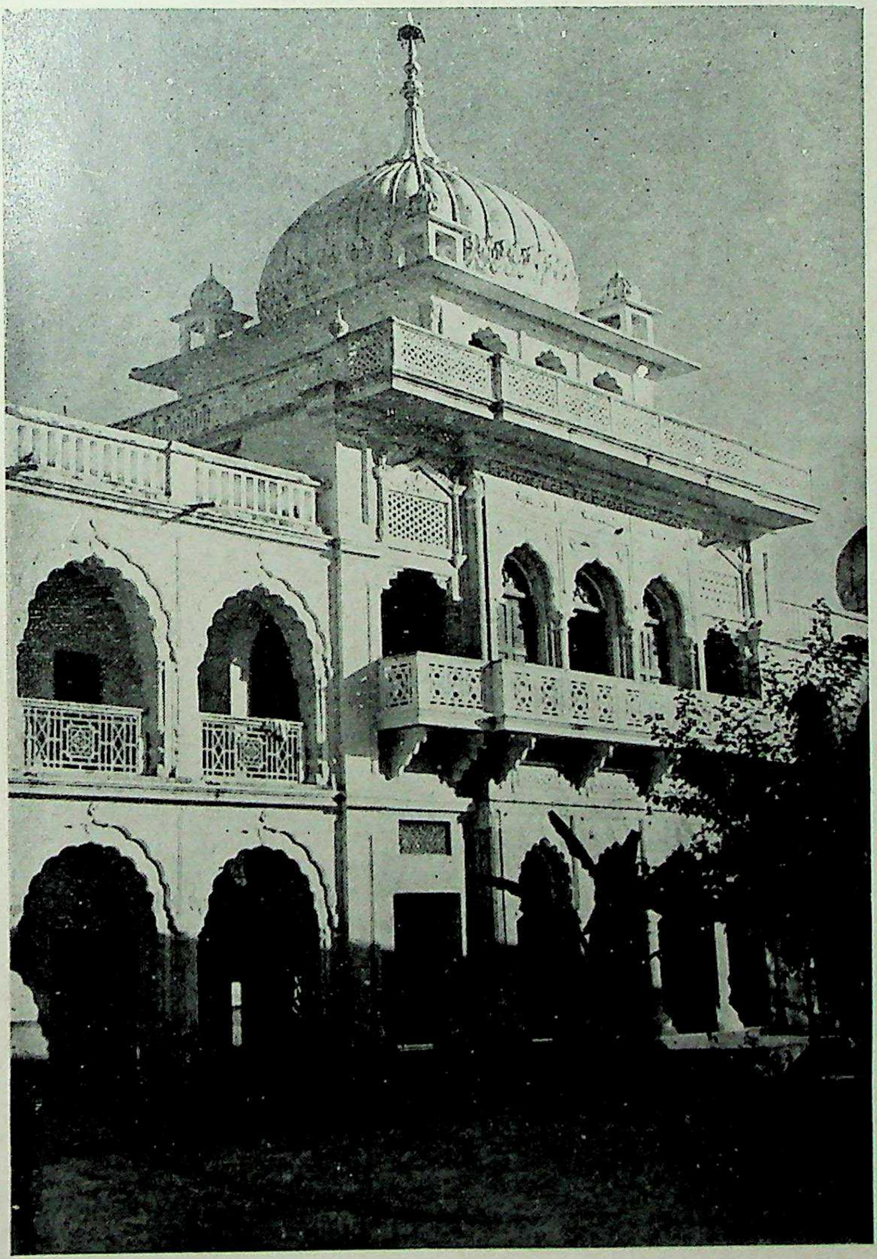
22. MOHAMMEDPUR (New Delhi) – The Hindu Temple



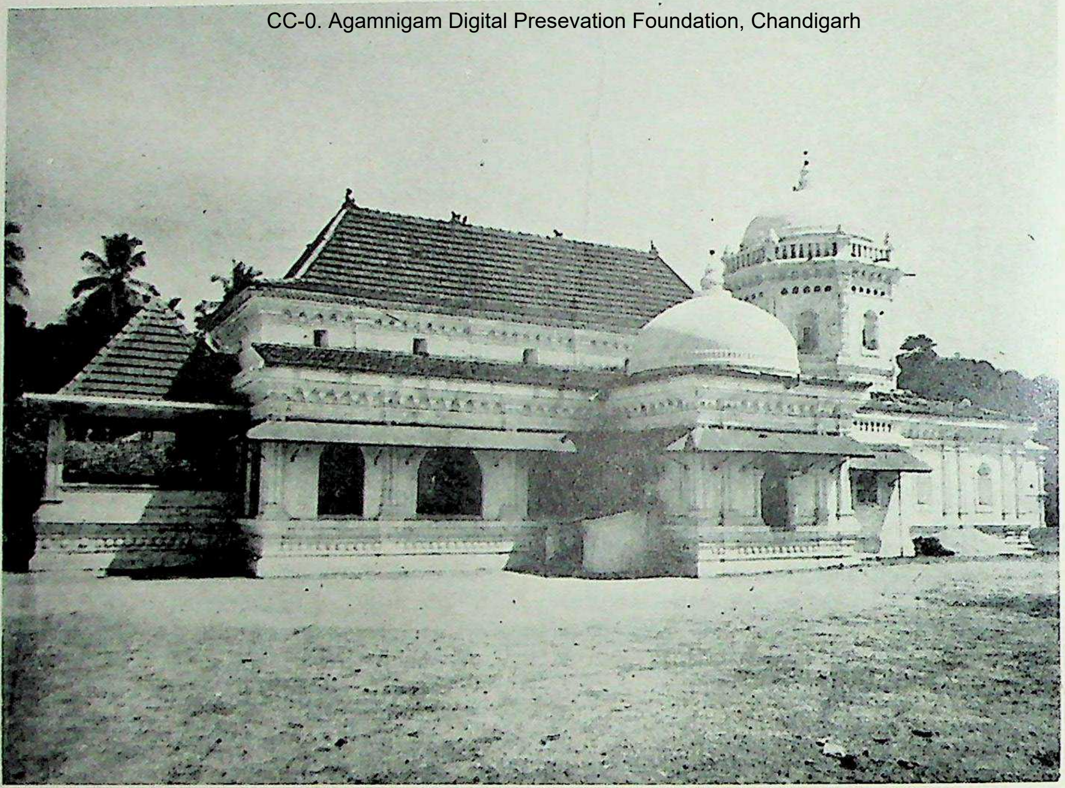
23. MOHAMMEDPUR (New Delhi) – The Tomb



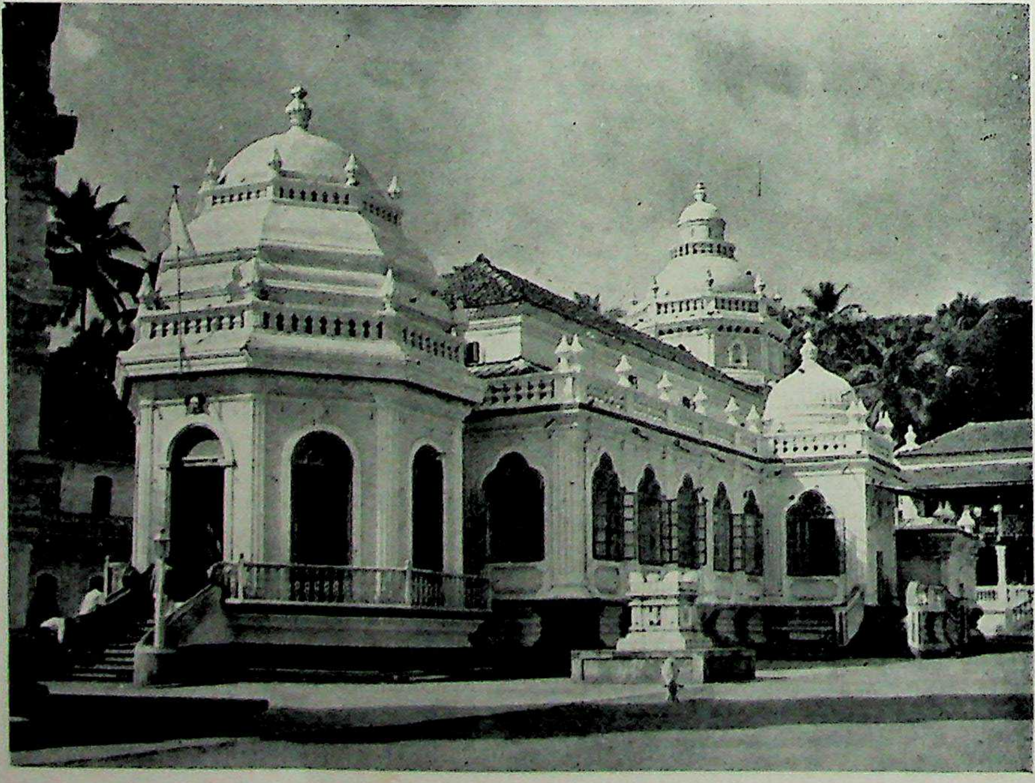
24. DELHI – Jama Masjid



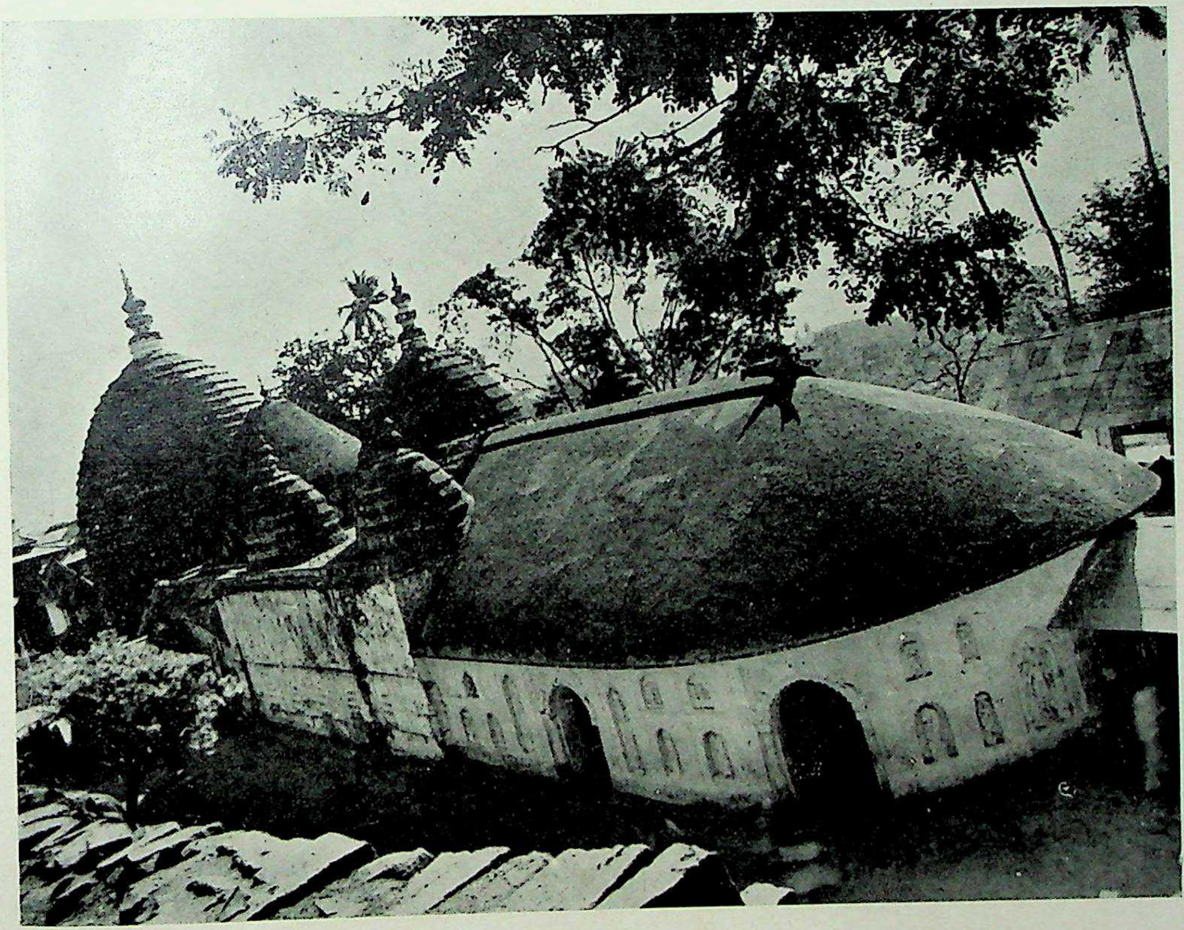
25. PATNA – The Birth Place of Guru Gobind Singh



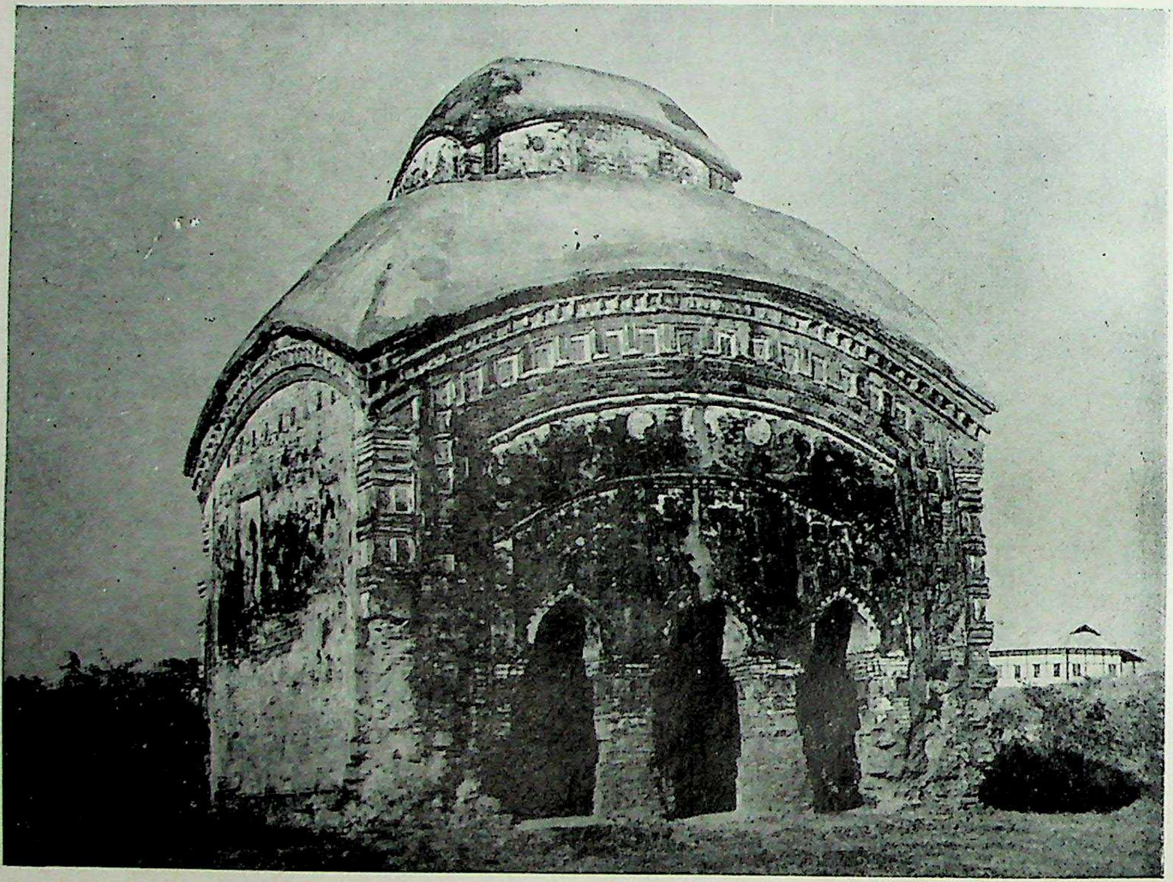
26. GOA – Nagesh Temple



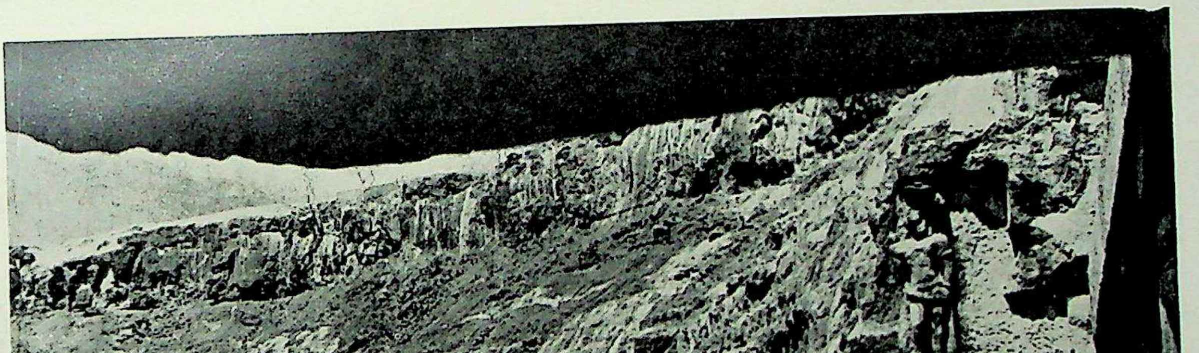
27. GOA – Mahalakshmi Temple



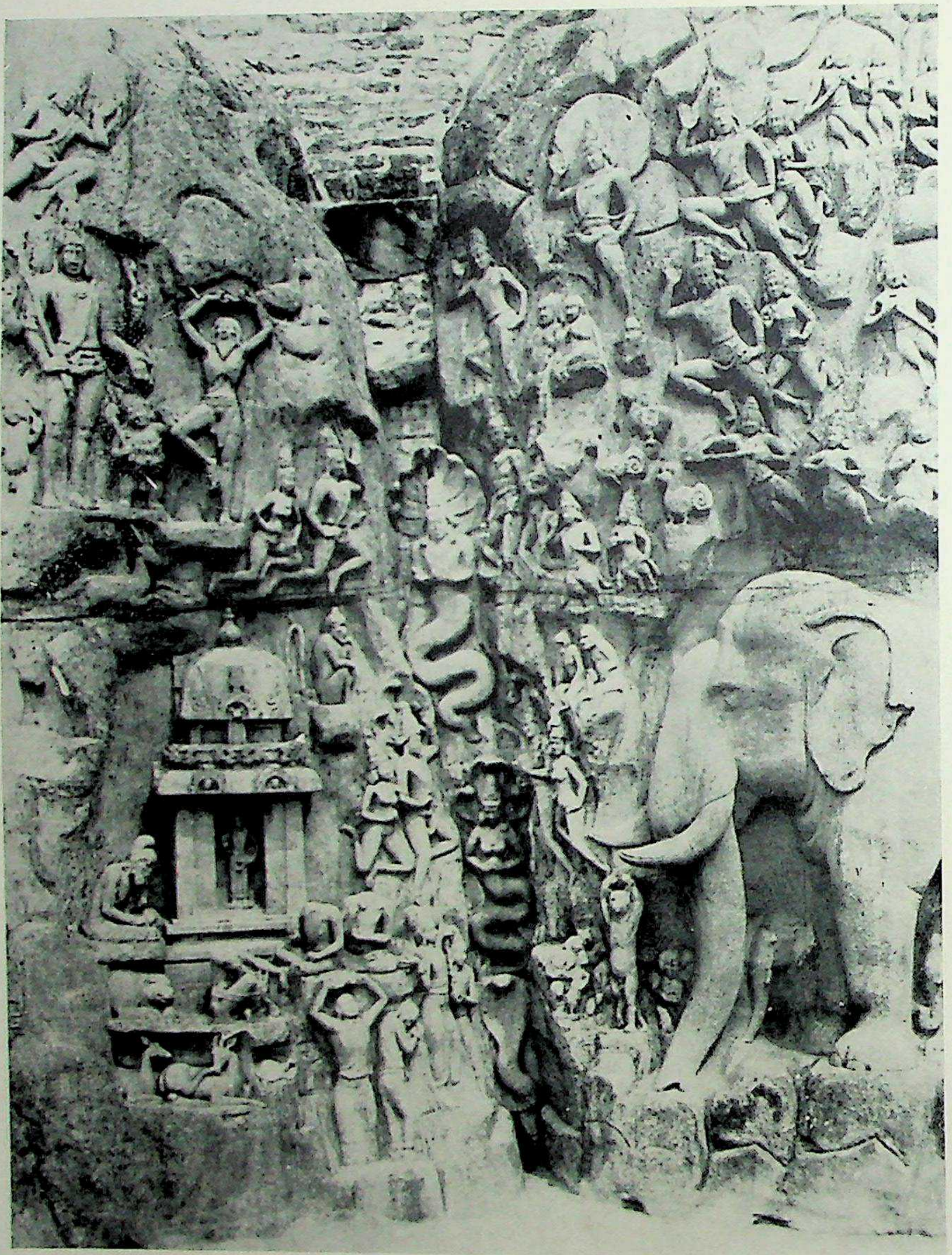
28. GAUHATI – Kamakhya Temple



29. JAI SAGAR – Ghanashyam Temple

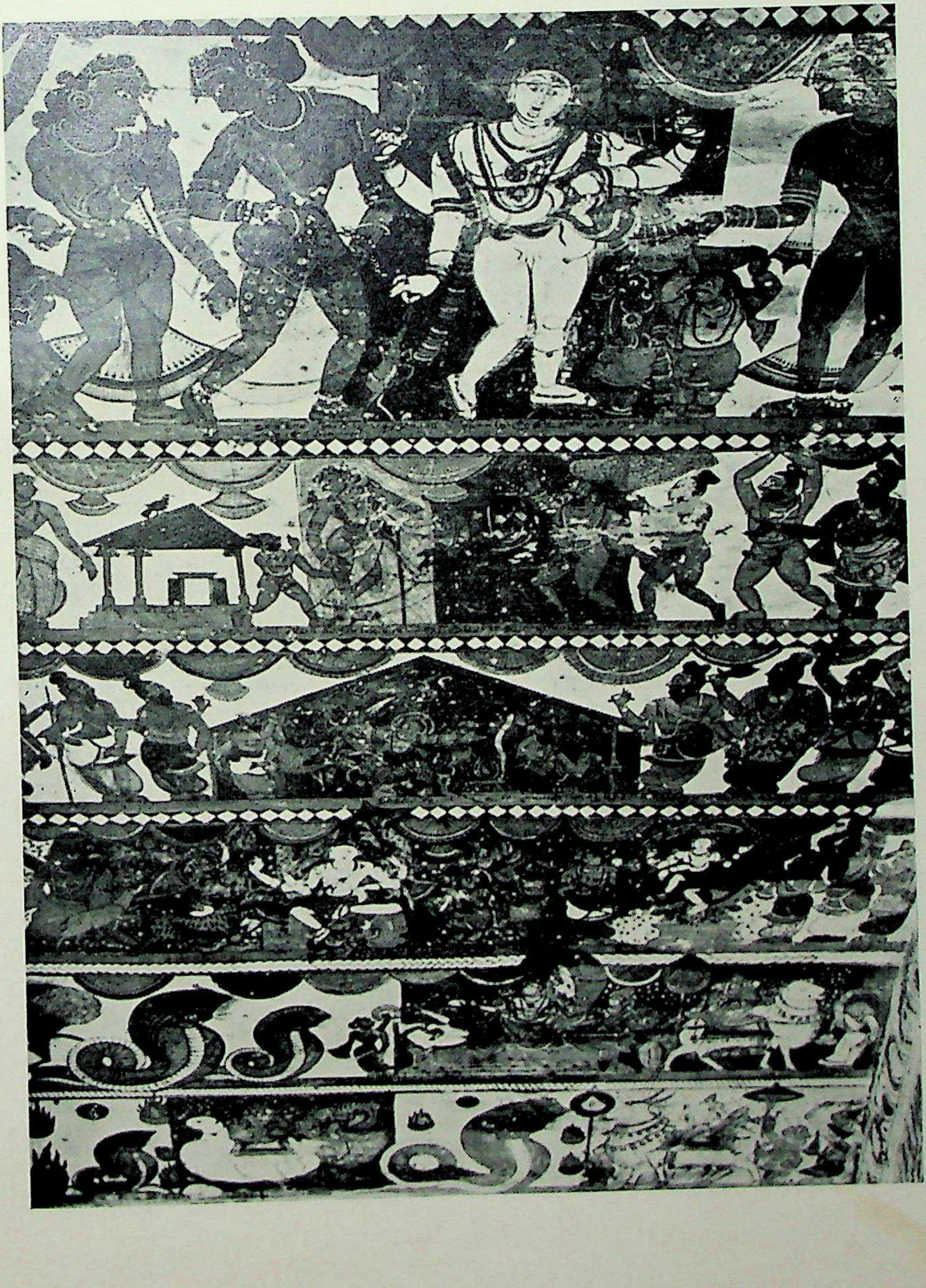


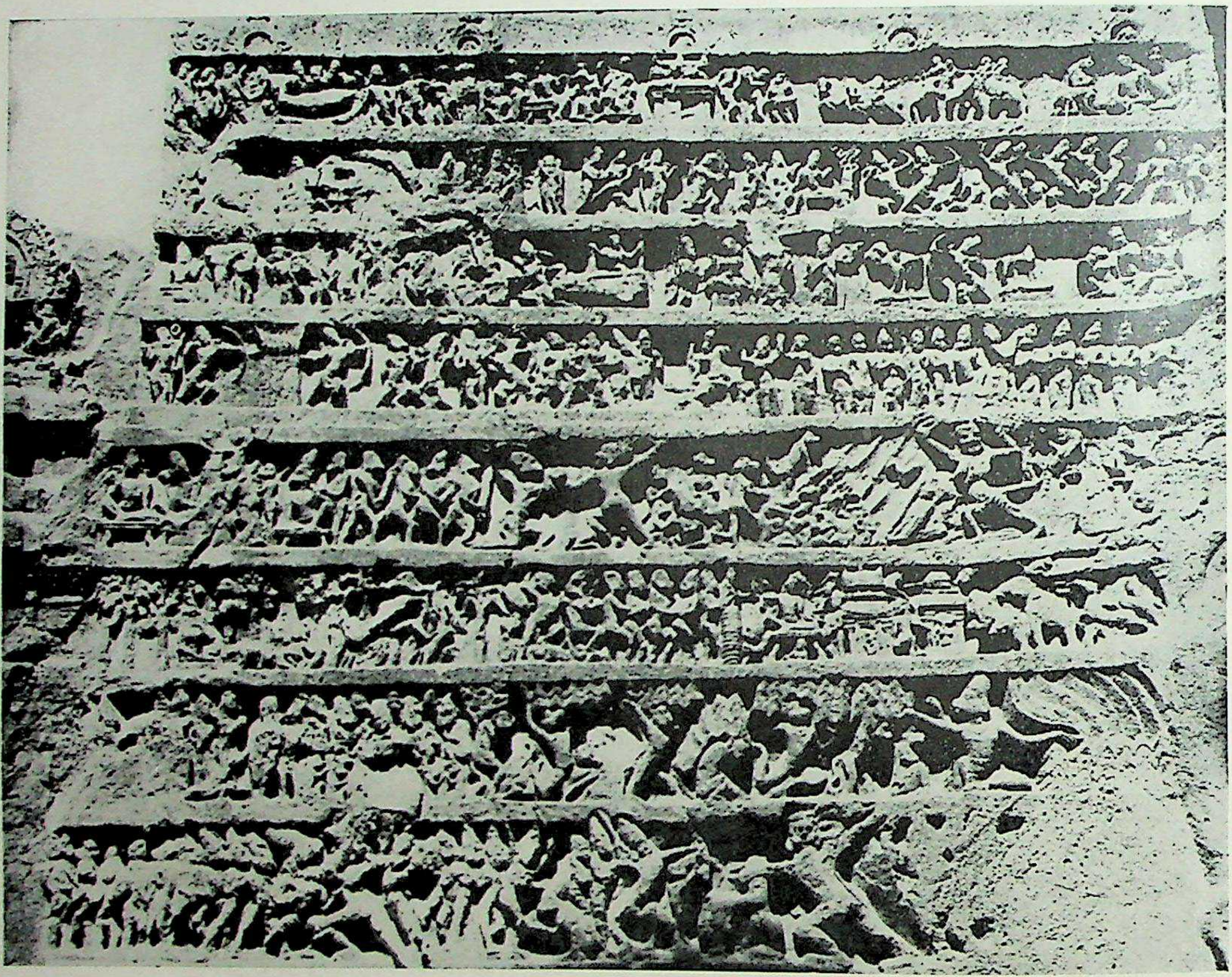
30. AJANTA – Caves No. 10 to 17



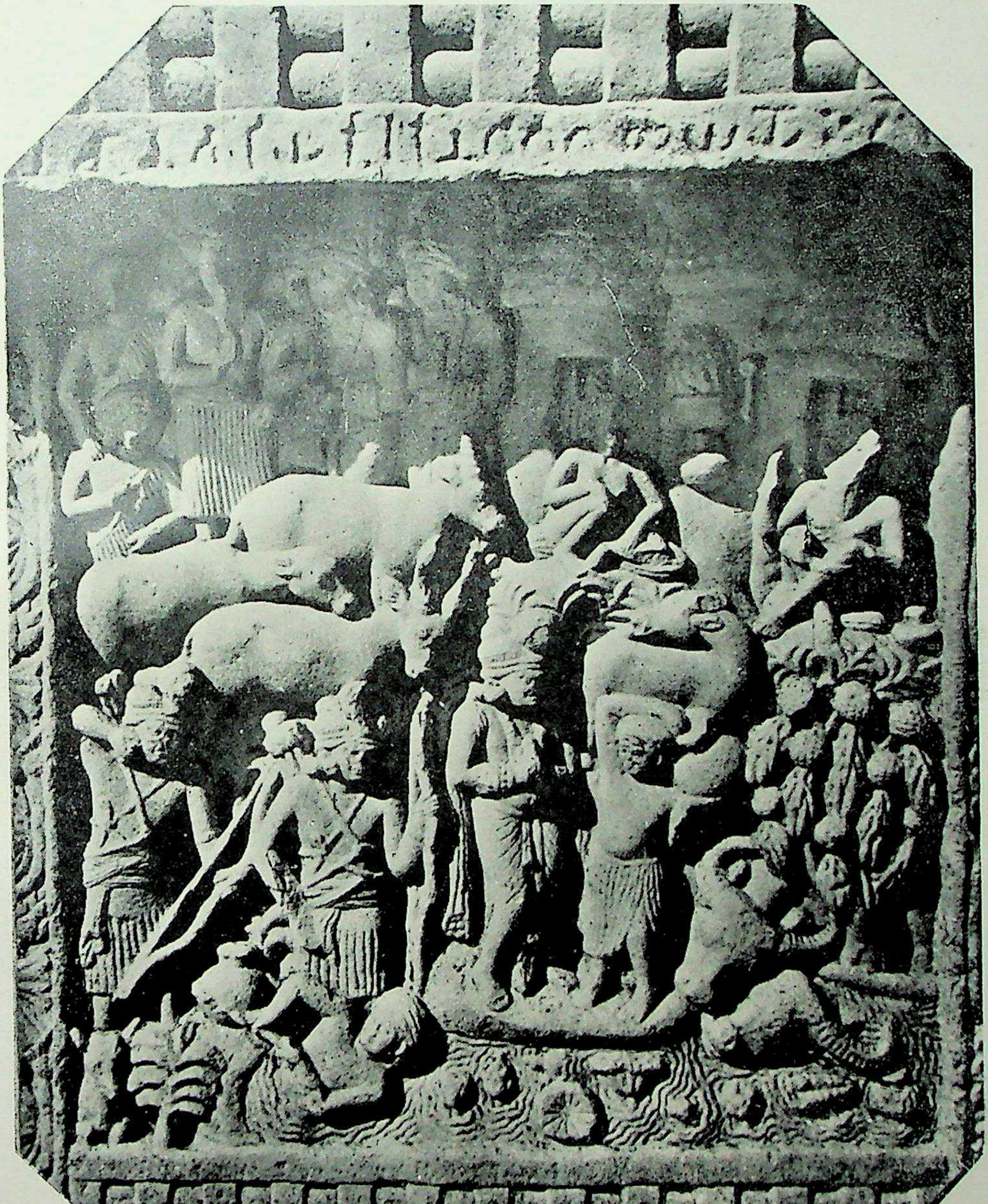
31. MAHABALIPURAM – Arjuna's Penance

32. CHIDAMBARAM – Devi Temple. Painting on the ceiling of the mandapa

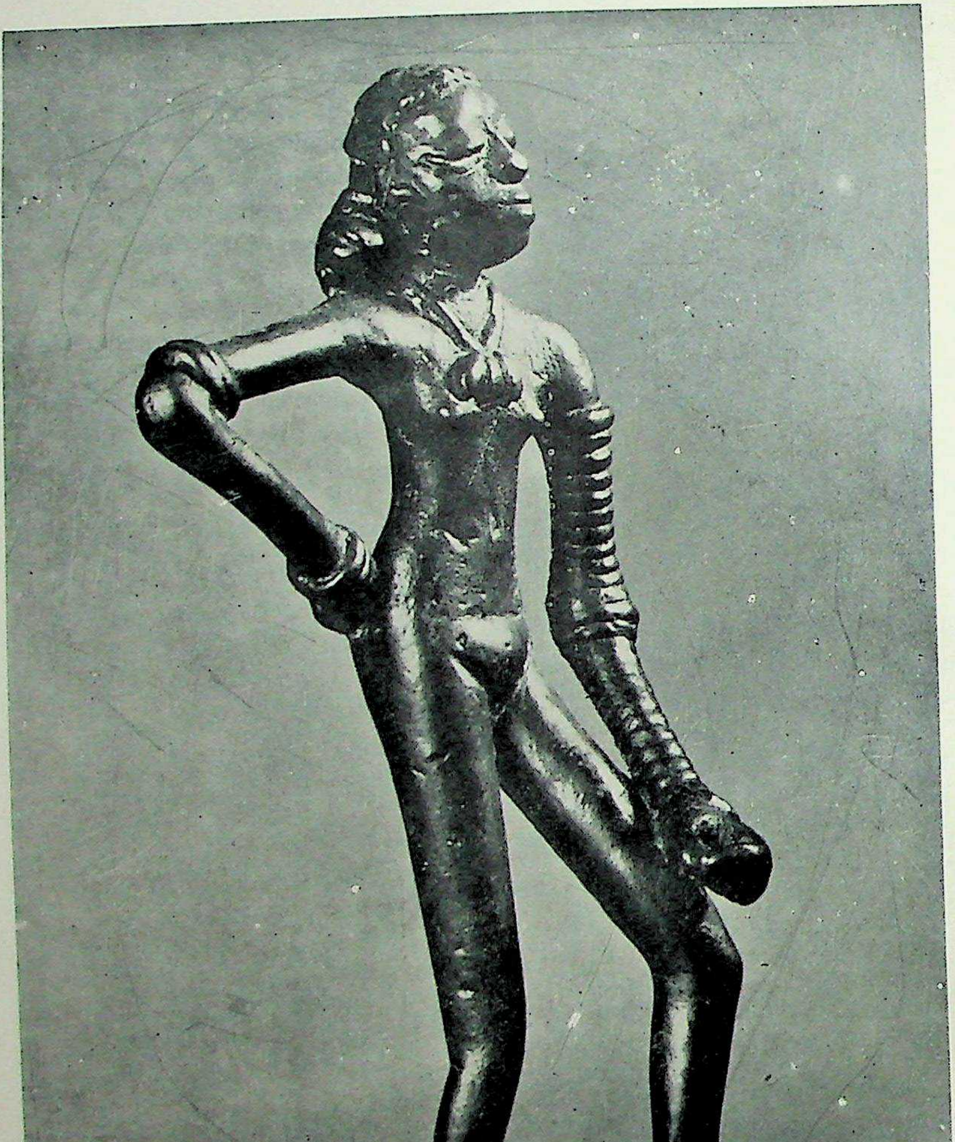




33. ELLORA – A mythological scene

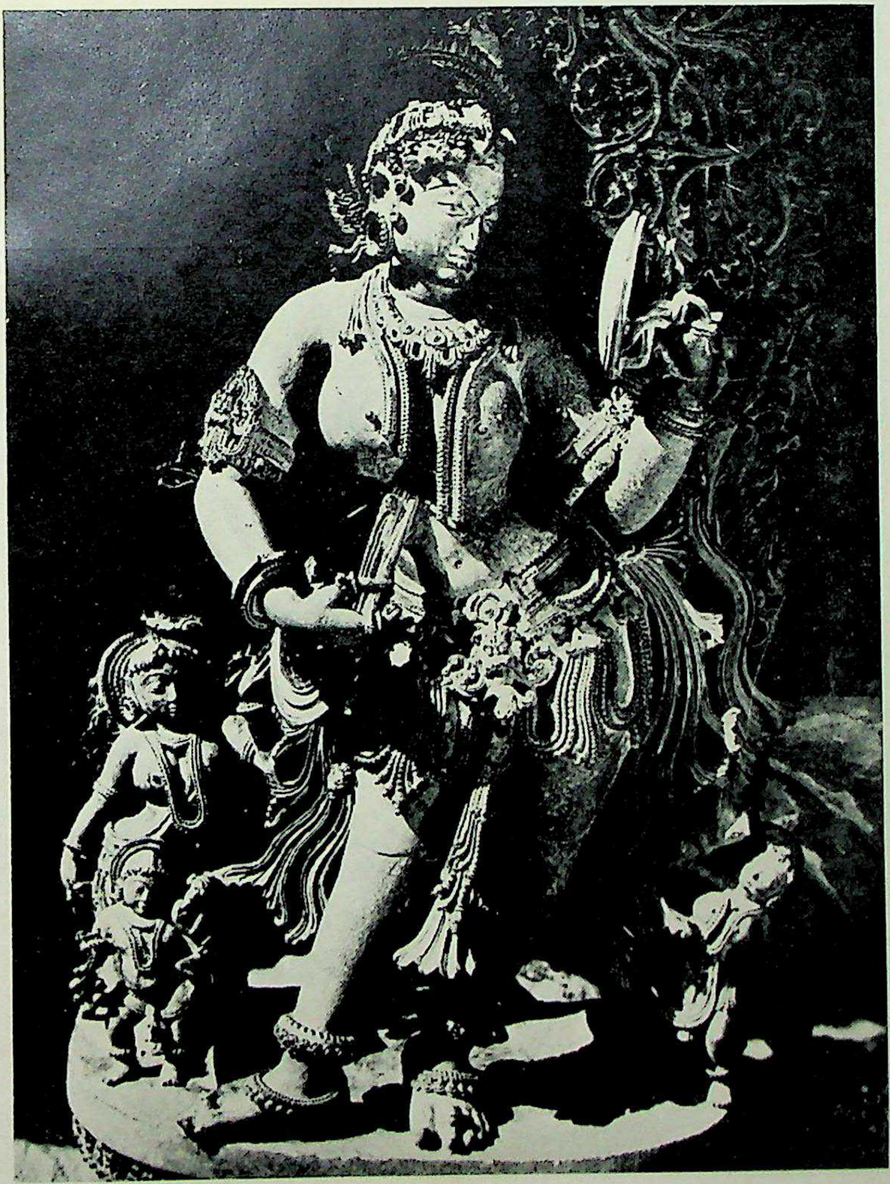


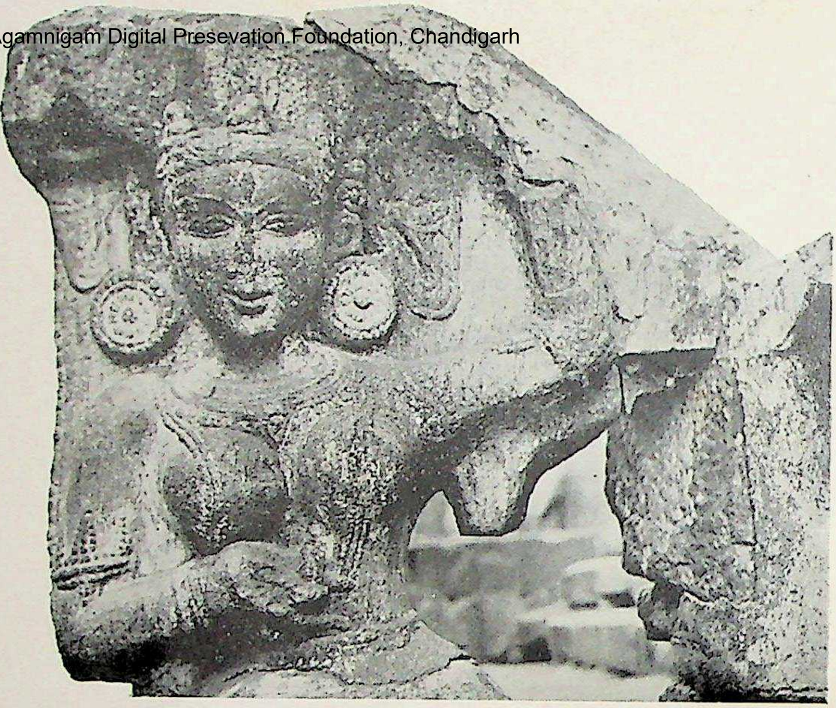
34. SANCHI – A Jataka story in West Gate



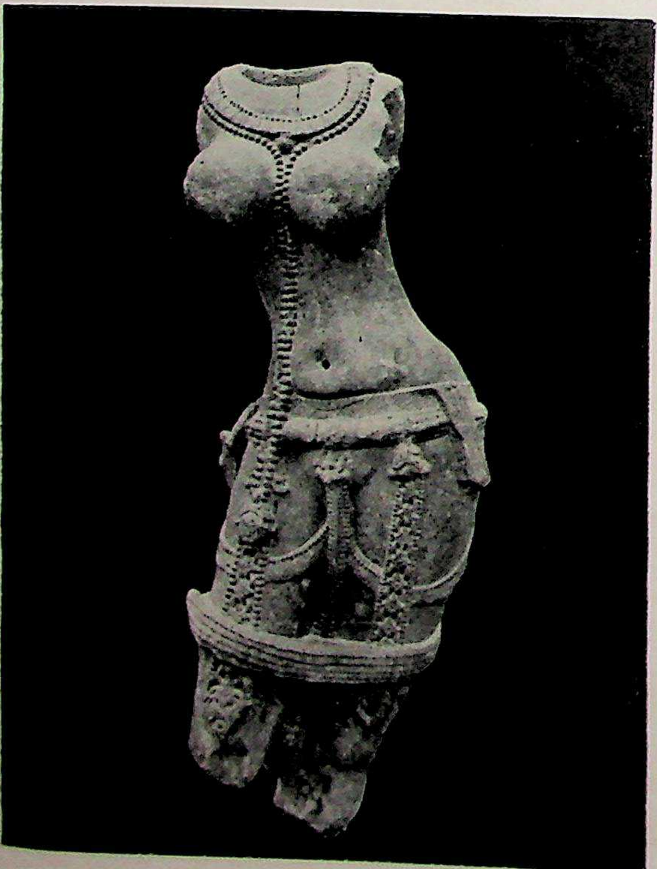
35. MOHENJODARO – The Dancing Girl

36. BELUR – A Beauty of Chennakeshava Temple





37. GAUHATI – Kamakhya Temple



38. UNKNOWN – Sculptures-torso of a female figure

Agam Kala Prakashan Delhi